

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A
LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH TO TEACHING IN NAMIBIA**

BY

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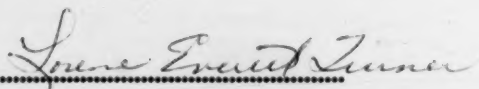
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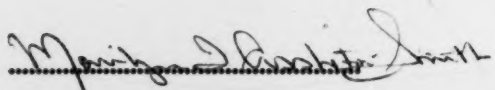
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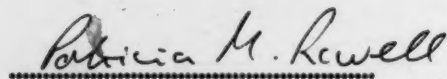
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH TO TEACHING IN NAMIBIA submitted by Cecilia Mwaka Sibuku in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.



Dr. L. Everett-Turner: Supervisor



Dr. M. Assheton-Smith



Dr. P. Rowell

Date: October 25, 1996

This Thesis is dedicated to:

The fond memories of the one who was both an uncle and a father, the late 'Ngambela' Robert Ntelamo Sinvula. His love, wisdom, strong family values and perseverance in life will always be sources of inspiration to me.

And to my family:

My two loving sons: Sibuku Sibuku and Mushaukwa Sibuku.

My beloved husband: Michael Sibuku.

ABSTRACT

After obtaining political independence from South Africa in 1990, the new Namibian government felt a need to change the colonial education system which was teacher-centered in orientation and promoted rote learning and memorization. The post independent Namibia advocated an education system that was to promote and encourage active learning in all Namibian schools. To achieve this goal, a new teacher education program called Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) was introduced in order to facilitate the implementation of the learner centered approach. The first graduates of the program began teaching in January 1996.

The study sought to find out whether the first graduates of the BETD program would successfully implement a learner centered approach. Are they well prepared and confident enough to introduce it in their classrooms? Will they be influenced to use teacher directed methods? Will they encounter some problems in using a learner centered approach? To obtain answers to these questions data were collected through the use of questionnaires, document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews. Two questionnaires with open ended and closed ended questions were designed for this study.

The first questionnaire was administered to graduating students specializing for grades 1-4 at Caprivi College of Education during their last month at College (December 1995). This questionnaire was aimed at getting opinions, beliefs and

understanding of the student teachers about a learner centered approach and whether or not they felt prepared to introduce it in their classrooms.

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the initial teaching experiences of the beginning teachers, two teachers were followed for interviews and observations of their classroom practices during their first three months of teaching. Interviews and classroom observations were conducted on a weekly basis. To get a broader view of the experiences, concerns and problems of the beginning teachers, a second questionnaire was administered to the entire group during their third month of teaching (March, 1996).

The study revealed that, although the participants had acquired a good theoretical knowledge of a learner centered approach, some of them were using both learner-centered and teacher centered teaching strategies. The lack of physical facilities and basic materials in the schools visited were not conducive to the implementation of a learner centered approaches. This caused some of the participants to fall back on traditional teaching methods despite initial enthusiasm for a learner centered approach.

Implementation of a learner centered approach requires not only educating teachers in this approach, but it also calls for support in terms of physical resources such as larger classrooms and an adequate supply of teaching resources.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Between the 'imminent future' and the imminent past stands the 'insistent present', the present contains all there is. It is the holy ground, for it is the past, and it is the future. The question to be faced is what to do now? Teachers have to understand what it means to teach. To this co-experience, for it is always teaching-learning, there are four faces: what to teach? why teach it? whom do we teach? and how? The quick answers to these questions are: reliable and useful knowledge, a philosophy of life, all God's children, and method and technique. But quick answers are not good enough. Teachers have suffered too long from quick answers. They need to know with utmost clarity, insight and precision what the teaching-learning act is and what happens because of it. (Johnson, 1971: 184)

Background to the problem

When Namibia gained independence in 1990 it resolved to embark on the process of nation building which included some educational reforms. Some of the changes that occurred in the Namibian education system included moving away from teacher centered to learner centered teaching approaches, from fragmented education to a national educational system, and from an authoritarian type of education to a democratic education. These moves called for the establishment of a new teacher education program in order to meet the needs of the proposed education system. The teacher education system before independence had some short comings. After independence in 1990, it was discovered that some of the teacher education programs

were putting too much emphasis on academic knowledge and formal examinations while professionalisation was neglected.

Although some of the education systems in Namibia which were introduced before independence were able to take into consideration both academic knowledge and professionalisation, they were found to be very expensive. After independence, the new government advocated a balance between the two and yet affordable in terms of funds. Most importantly, the new education system was to be learner centered in nature. To facilitate the implementation of the new things that teachers had to learn and implement, a new teacher education program known as the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) was introduced in Namibia. As one of the aims of the new education system was to promote learning through understanding, the BETD program was specifically founded on the principle of learner centered approaches to teaching in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of a learner centered approach by the first graduates of a teacher education program which is oriented to a learner centered pedagogy. My interest is to find out whether these teachers will use teaching methods that encourage more active learning rather than passive learning in their classrooms.

Education in pre-independent Namibia

Geographically, Namibia is located in the south western part of Africa. It covers an area of about 824,268 square kilometers (318,250 square miles). Although

Namibia is four times the size of Britain, it has a population of only 1.6 million, making it one of the lowest population densities in the world, with fewer than five people per square kilometer. Namibia, the last colony of the African continent, was first colonized by the Germans in 1884-1915 and by South Africa from 1915-1990.

Historically, like in many other African Countries, formal education in Namibia was first introduced by the missionaries. The main objectives of the missionary schools were to convert the indigenous people to Christianity and to train them for semi-skilled employment in the Eurocentric economy. Some missionaries believed that the European values and civilization were much superior to those in Africa. They therefore felt that it was their duty to teach European civilization and culture to the Africans. Missionaries also set up schools which were exclusively for whites and were supported by the German colonizers. In 1906, education for whites was proclaimed compulsory and its aim was to produce the European ideal type of education.

On the other hand, most of the missionary curriculum for blacks included the ten commandments, the history of Israel, woodwork, physical training, singing, brick making, and hygiene. Schools were built with local materials by the native people under the supervision of the missionaries (Ndilula, 1984). According to Ndilula (1984), a shortage of teachers led to the establishment of the teacher training centers at Otjimbingwe between 1860-1870; at Augustneum in Okahandja in 1906; and at Onnipa between 1910-1914. Teachers who were trained in these centers were often encouraged to set up their own schools in the rural areas. These were commonly

known as 'village schools' and were the poorest schools in the country. Ndilula (1984) for example described them as follows:

They were 'little nothings', neglected, poorest and unsupervised. Their buildings were often ugly shacks with no equipment. A large number of their teachers were those communicants who had mastered the recital of the ten commandments. The program of school activities normally include the 3Rs, gardening, local crafts and character development through moral and religious instruction and practice. Most of the teaching was done under the trees, and this meant that there was no school on rainy days. (p.389)

From 1909, the German colonial authorities started giving support to black schools. Ironically, they spent nearly 37 times more on white education for the year 1914/15. Even after the end of German rule in 1915 these arrangements were maintained until 1949 under the administration of the South African authority. South African colonizers also came up with their own rules that were to govern the education of Namibia. In 1958 it was decided that three education systems should be set up in Namibia (then called South West Africa) based on race. This led to the establishment of an education system solely for blacks, one for whites, and one for coloreds. The van Zyl commission established in 1958 recommended that Bantu education which was introduced in South African black schools should be introduced in Namibian black schools. The three education systems established were very different both in quality and quantity as noted in Ndilula's statement: "The education for the blacks is the worst followed by that for coloreds, contrasting with the 'superb' educational provision for

whites (Afrikaners, Germans and English) in Namibia." (Ndilula, 1984:390)

The main aim of introducing a different education system for each race was to reinforce the apartheid ideology and to nurture the status quo of blacks being at the service of their colonial masters. This idea could be detected in the speech delivered by Dr. Verwoerd who was then the Minister of Native Affairs on July 7, 1954 as he asserted:

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society. The Bantu's education must be able to give itself complete expression, and there, it will be called upon to perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor ... until now, he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. (cited in Ndilula 1984:390)

According to Ndilula (1984), its purpose was strongly condemned by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) because they saw the Bantu education as "designed in such a way to pacify the youth into a state of docile acceptance of the status quo" (p.390). Its purpose was further pointed out by the Ministry of Education and Culture:

Initially, Education for black Namibians was justified in terms of its vocational utility. For the most part, its task was to prepare people for the specific jobs that German and then South African rule required. Except for a very

small number of people who were to become messengers, clerks, and other functionaries in the administrative system, basic literacy and numeracy was deemed sufficient. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993:2)

During the colonial era, education in Namibia was primarily a privilege of the minority groups. The Bantu education that was offered to blacks was far inferior to that of the Whites and Coloreds. The only teaching approaches that were used in black schools were those which fostered memorization and inhibited critical thinking. The main aim was to prepare blacks to serve their colonial masters.

Education in post-independent Namibia

When Namibia gained independence from South Africa in 1990, the new government felt that there was a need to change the existing education system which separated people on the basis of race and ethnicity. The new Namibian government resolved to embark on educational reform and nation building. They therefore advocated a national education system and a move away from the teaching methods that emphasized a teacher centered approach and promoted rote learning and memorization. An important part of this reform was the implementation of a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) in 1993. This three year study program, which prepares teachers for grades 1-10 was founded on the principles of a learner centered approach which involves interactive teaching and learning.

A teacher centered approach which dominated the Namibian schools before independence is still being used in both primary and secondary schools in Namibia. There is the hope that as more teachers graduate from teacher programs which expose them to the learner centered teaching strategies, the shift from a teacher centered approach to a learner centered approach will be achieved. The first graduates of the learner centered teacher education program started teaching in January 1996.

The main aim of introducing a new teacher education program in Namibia, was to train teachers who would encourage active rather than passive learning in the classrooms. The methodology of the new teacher education program puts emphasis on a democratic education which promotes learning through understanding and is geared towards independent mastering of living conditions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992). Rowell (1995) contends that in learner centered education, "the role of the teacher becomes that of mediator of learning experiences in which the learners generate meaning rather than one of transmitter of knowledge to the learners" (p.7). According to Meyers (1993), "active learning is defined as interactive teaching and learning (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992). Learning is viewed as an interactive, shared and productive process. This is further confirmed by German (1969) who pointed out that "true interaction produces a cohesive classroom group where teacher and students share responsibility for the defining, carrying out, and evaluating of the learning experience" (p.31). According to him, the students work together with their teachers to get the job done, and this is much more satisfying than

the situation where teachers try to do all the work by themselves.

The Namibian government felt that a learner centered approach can only be successfully implemented in all Namibian schools if the student teachers are being taught in this approach, appreciate it and feel confident in using it. In addition, teachers who have been teaching in a traditional teacher centered approach should also be given in-service training in a learner centered approaches.

To investigate how the first graduates of a learner centered teacher program perceive a learner centered approach and whether they were prepared to introduce the approach in their classrooms, this study focused on one group, the first graduates and beginning teachers of the BETD program in Early Childhood focus (grades 1 to 4). This group (graduates from the Caprivi College of Education) was surveyed towards the end of their program and as beginning teachers. In addition, two beginning teachers from the same group were observed in their classrooms and interviewed.

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Would the first graduates of the BETD program be able to successfully implement learner centered approach?
2. Would they be well prepared and confident enough to introduce it in their classrooms?
3. Would they be influenced to use teacher directed methods?
4. Would they encounter problems in using learner centered approach?

In order to answer these questions the researcher used interviews, questionnaires, document analysis and classroom observations to collect data about the graduates' use of learner centered approach.

To gain insight into the relationship of how novice teachers of the BETD program were taught and how they were actually teaching, the researcher designed a questionnaire to survey the opinions of graduating students about their preparation and their perceptions of a learner centered approach. The researcher also made use of the College Monitoring Committee reports to gain insight into how these teachers had been taught.

In order to gain a more in-depth look at what happened once the students began teaching, the researcher focused on two beginning teachers in the lower primary grades (grades 1-4) for a period of three months. This involved weekly visits to the classrooms followed by interviews with the teachers. A second questionnaire survey was administered to all beginning teachers in grades 1-4 during their third month of teaching to gain information about their initial teaching experiences.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study is threefold:

1. To seek opinions of graduating students regarding how adequately they feel their teacher education program prepared them to implement a learner centered approach.

2. To gain insight into the experiences, problems, and concerns of beginning teachers.
3. To obtain information useful for planning and defining future pre-service and in-service teacher programs.

Significance of the Study

Since no previous study has been carried out in Namibia to get the opinions of beginning teachers concerning this teaching approach, this study will shed light on the realities experienced by this first group of novice teachers. Ende (1961) claims that a follow-up study can form a very important link between pre-service and in-service education. Like Ende (1961), I also believe that a study of this nature could be very informative to teacher educators, to program designers, and school administrators. Information from this study could help in planning in-service programs on the basis of identified concerns and problems of beginning teachers.

This study could provide college instructors with valuable information as to whether or not program goals and instructional strategies of the pre-service teacher programs meet the perceived needs of beginning teachers. It could also provide school administrators with useful information that could be used in planning future in-service teacher programs. Good and Scates, cited in Shanahan (1970), believe that data of this nature would be highly regarded by school administrators as data from the field provide practical evidence which has come out of real situations.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have significant meaning in the context of this study:

Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD): Refers to the 3 year teacher education program in Namibia preparing teachers for grades 1-10.

Beginning teachers: Teachers in their first year of teaching.

Coloreds: Refers to people of mixed race (Black and White).

Early childhood route: Student teachers specializing to teach at a lower primary level (Grades 1-4).

In-service teacher programs: Program designed to upgrade skills of practicing teachers.

Learner centered approach: Is a teaching approach which promotes learning through understanding, in which teachers act as facilitators. Teachers take into account the individual needs of the learners, encourage active involvement, and empower the learners to take risks in the teaching and learning situation.

Novice teachers: Beginning teachers in their first year of teaching.

Pre-service teacher programs: Teacher programs designed to prepare student teachers.

Teacher centered approach: Refers to a traditional teaching method in which a teacher dominates the teaching learning situation. The learning is mostly through memorization and rote learning.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Some non educators think that learning is a process of passively receiving information. More pointedly, they view knowledge as an objective entity that learners must somehow assimilate into their minds. From this perspective, teaching is a process of dispensing information. The teacher moves from student to student, filling each mind with the facts of the lesson. When a well-taught lesson is completed, all students have the same knowledge and understanding of the content.

A radically different perspective of learning has surfaced from the research and theory in cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychologists view learning as a highly interactive process of constructing personal meaning from the information available in a learning situation and then integrating that information with what we already know to create new knowledge. (Marzano, 1992:5)

Changes that occurred in the Namibian education system at the time of independence included moving away from fragmented education to a national education system; from education for the elite to education for all; from traditional teaching methods (teacher centered approach) which were more authoritarian in nature, to a new teaching method (learner centered approach) which in contrast to the former is more democratic in nature.

This study focuses on the shift from teacher centered to a learner centered approach within Namibia. This chapter will provide information on the events within

Namibia leading to this change, provide background information on teacher centered and learner centered education, and documentation on the Namibian Teacher Education Program. As the study also looked at how beginning teachers were implementing learner centered teaching methods in their classrooms, literature on beginning teachers will also be reviewed.

Educational reforms in Namibia

After obtaining political independence in 1990 the government placed education as one of the priority issues. Therefore, the condition of education in general, as well as teacher education programs, were surveyed. The findings of this survey indicated that the existing education system in Namibia was "inefficient, ineffective, fragmented, ethnic and unequal" (Ministry of Education Culture Youth and Sport, 1990). Similarly, the state of pre-independent teacher education was reported in 'Change with Continuity' Education Reform Directive (1990) as follows:

The state of teacher education in the country is similar to education in general: uncoordinated, fragmented, ill-organized and non-uniform. Thus, an in-depth investigation of the pre-service teacher training program was called for (p.28).

On the basis of these findings, there was a strong need to reform the colonial education system.

A Learner Centered Approach in Namibian Perspective

Callewaert and Kallos (1992) identified at least two distinct views of learner centered pedagogy or child centered education. The first view was described as follows:

The first view of a learner centered education regards the child as active and curious, striving to acquire knowledge and skills to master its surrounding world and able to do so under certain circumstances. The ensuing pedagogy is accordingly adapted to the experiences of each learner and uses these experiences and the knowledge already acquired by the learner as a starting point for the teaching process. The necessary pedagogy is flexible and highly individualized in terms of content methods of instruction and pacing (p.17).

This view of a learner centered pedagogy puts emphasis on democratic education. The methodology of this education system requires a shift from authoritarian type of instruction, in which the teacher dominates the teaching and learning situations, to a situation whereby both teachers and learners have influence over what is taught and how it is taught. In this view the child is not seen as an empty vessel but as a person with potentialities and experiences which could be utilized as a starting point by the teacher.

Callewaert and Kallos (1992) pointed out that a second view of the learner centered pedagogy is commonly referred to in literature dealing with the theories of knowledge and knowledge acquisition. They described this view as follows:

This second view focuses on the presumed capability of each child to learn predefined skills and regards knowledge as definable as such and accordingly does not regard knowledge as contextually dependent. It emphasizes a behavioristic view of learning and the ensuing pedagogy is accordingly highly dependent on the instructional media used. The pedagogy is individualized principally in terms of pacing but not necessarily in terms of content or methods of instruction. It regards knowledge acquisition as a cumulative process which is to be closely monitored in a step by step instructional process via the use of instructional media that allow the learners to work at their own pace supervised by the teacher. Essentially this pedagogy epistemologically regards the child as an object. (p.18)

Callewaert and Kallos (1992) believe that the second view is different from the first in terms of the concept of democratic education. They contend that in the second view, democratic education mainly focuses on the right of every child to acquire the predefined skills and knowledge in the curriculum of the basic education program. Although it takes a different stance of the concept of teacher authority, it does not imply a democratic relationship between the teacher and the learner. It requires new behaviors of the teacher in terms of the ability of the teacher to use new instructional media but essentially de-emphasizes the role of the teacher as a professional.

The second view of learner centered pedagogy was rejected by the Namibian government as it contradicted the rationale as well as the aims and objectives of the new education system in Namibia. The first view that was advocated recognizes the child as an active, curious being striving for knowledge. The first view emphasizes

that knowledge acquisition should proceed from the child's own experience. This view of learner centered education is anchored in many Namibian documents.

The broad curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1992) describes the learner centered approach as follows:

The learner-centered education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner valuing the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies. Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of the learners' needs. They should use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made study materials, and thus develop their own and the learner's creativity. A learner centered approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production (p.3).

In the same vein, the Pilot Curriculum for the Senior Secondary Education (1993) in Namibia describes learner centered education as follows:

Learner centered education takes as its starting point the learner as an active inquisitive human being, striving to acquire knowledge and skills to master his/her surrounding world. The learner brings to the school a wealth of knowledge and social experience gained from the family, the community and interaction with the environment. This knowledge and experience is a potential which can be utilized and drawn upon in teaching and learning. From the same perspective, the learner is seen as an individual with his/her own needs, pace of learning, experiences and abilities, and a learner-centered education must take this into account. In the classroom, learning should clearly be a communicative and interactive process, drawing on a range of methods as appropriate for different groups of learners and the task at hand. These include group and pair work,

learning by doing, self-and peer assessment, with emphasis on the supportive and managerial role of the teacher (p.3).

Similar, Nyambe (1993) described learner centered methods in this way:

The basis for learner centered methods is that knowledge is not a finished entity or something that is done and is therefore closed. It is not a package which one can simply hand over to someone to receive passively. Knowledge is a process of continuous construction. The fact that knowledge is a matter of human construction entails that learners are never left out in such a process. Learner centered methods therefore entail that learners are given the opportunity to identify a problem in a guided manner to explore, investigate, analyze, extrapolate, share, debate, discover and experiment. Learner Centered methods call for pupil active participation in the teaching learning situation. In such classroom situations learners are more active than the teacher. The role of the teacher is to guide and facilitate the learning process. When planning and presenting lessons the learner's individual needs, potentials, abilities, etc. are taken into consideration. The individual learner's needs, learning pace, abilities, potentials, etc. are major determinants of what activities to plan for the lesson. The teacher is expected to treat learners as individuals and they should not be expected to advance at the same pace. The teacher does not teach to cover the syllabus but to help the child develop and realize his potential. Learner centered methods include methods like project work, group discussions, dramatization, experimentation, diary writing, etc. (p.2).

From the above descriptions one can discern that the new education system in Namibia views the child as an active, curious being eager to acquire knowledge. However, the acquisition of this knowledge should start at the level of the learner with

what the learner already knows, and the teacher should build on that. In contrast to the traditional education which viewed the learner as an empty vessel to be filled, the new education system is based on the belief that the child is endowed with potentials and experiences that he/she brings to school. In light of the above, collaborative learning is therefore emphasized. The teacher's role in the teaching and learning situation is to facilitate the learning process.

Structure of the Namibian Education System in General

Basic education is from grades 1 to 10 and it is compulsory for children to be in school for these 10 years. Normally the children are allowed to start school (grade 1) at the age of 7 and are allowed to drop out of school when they are 16 years old. However, in most classrooms there is a range of ages. For example, in grade 1, the ages of children can vary from 6 to 9 years. It is not compulsory for children to be in kindergarten before they start grade 1 as kindergartens are not available in many regions. Many children start grade 1 without going through kindergarten. The school years are formally divided as follows: Early Childhood or lower primary level is from grade 1 to grade 4; higher primary is from grade 5 to grade 7; junior secondary is from grade 8 to grade 10; and senior secondary includes grades 11 and 12. It is also important to mention that at present, teachers for grades 1 to 10 are trained in Teacher Colleges while senior secondary school teachers are trained at the University of Namibia (the only University in Namibia).

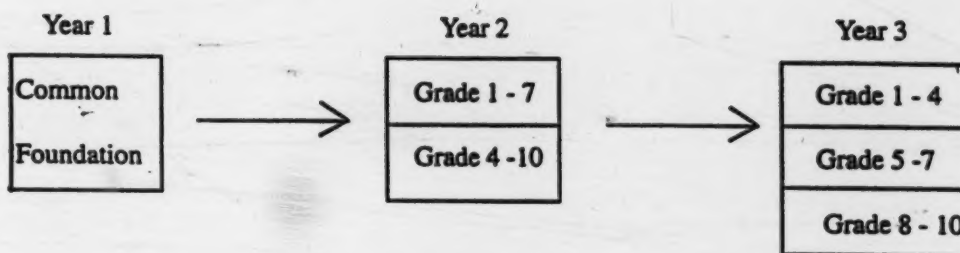
The Basic Education Teacher Diploma

The board Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma clearly outlines the rationale for the new teacher education program in Namibia. The rationale is congruent with the philosophy of the new education system in Namibia. For example, it emphasizes among other things the move away from a teacher centered to a learner centered teaching approach; a move away from a fragmented education system to a national education system; to strike a balance between professionalisation and academic knowledge (for specific details of the rationale and aims of the BETD program (see Appendices I and J).

The Basic Education Teacher Diploma has its own aims and objectives which are congruent with the rationale for the new teacher education system. In a nutshell, the program aims at preparing teachers who would respect the constitution of the Republic of Namibia; teachers who will value and respect the culture of the Namibian people; teachers who will promote active participation in their learners. The graduates of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma are also expected to bridge the gap between the school and the community.

The program is designed to prepare teachers to teach in grades 1-10. During the first year, all student teachers are required to take similar core subjects. In their second year of study, students split to specialize to teach either grades 1-7 or 4-10. In their third year which is their final year of study, students can further split to specialize to teach grades 1-4 (Early Childhood/lower primary) or grades 5-7 (upper/higher

primary), and grades 8-10 (junior secondary). The structure of the Basic Teacher Education Diploma is also outlined in the Broad Curriculum for Basic Education Teacher Diploma (see the structure below).



Admission requirements to the BETD program

The criteria used to select students for the BETD program include:

1. **Academic level:** The minimum entry requirement is grade 10 (Standard 8). However grade 12 is seen as preferable and, in the near future, the minimum entry requirement will be grade 12.
2. **Maturity:** The minimum age of entry is 18. If applicants fulfill other criteria for entry competency and show sufficient maturity, exceptions to the minimum age of entry can be made.

3. Experience: Acceptable teaching experience, other community activities, work experience or relevant interests will also be taken into account.
4. Interview: Applicants who fulfill the above criteria will be called in for an interview where reasoning and communication skills, personal and social qualities, and motivation will be observed. Applicants are evaluation on a three point scale as being unsuitable, suitable, or very promising.

Learner Centered Education in Global Perspective

Farrant (1980) believes there are some misconceptions that are held by different people concerning learner centered education. Some view it as "... a kind of child power movement where children virtually control what goes on in the schools. Others think of it as an over-sentimental attitude towards children that gives them unwarranted and damaging importance in the school" (p.128). However, Farrant (1980) argues that a child centered education is neither sentimental nor child controlled but it is just a positive attitude towards how children should be taught and how they learn. This approach therefore takes into account the child's developmental stage, interests and characteristics.

Farrant (1980:128) further pointed out that child centered education is committed to do the following:

1. Acknowledge that children's needs should determine what they learn at school.

2. Recognize and respond to the changing characteristics that distinguish children of different ages.
3. Train children in skills that are within the capabilities of their stage of development.
4. Select what is taught and the methods used so that they are appropriate to the comprehension and experience of the children.
5. Utilize the strong motivational forces that control so much of children's natural learning.
6. Apply knowledge of child psychology and child development to the content and methods of learning and teaching.

Farrant (1980) suggested that in primary schools that employ child centered teaching strategies, the classrooms should be equipped with many manipulatives to provide children with choices. Children in these classrooms would all be busy and none would be bored. Learning is not seen as a burden because they are "enjoying themselves as they work on their own or in groups (Farrant, 1980:128)." He contends that learning in these schools is an ongoing process drawing information either directly from their teachers or through the activities, and some of it indirectly from the classroom surroundings. Farrant (1980) pointed out that teachers "respect their pupils' individuality and try to enable each one to fulfill his potential. for their part, the children feel that what they are doing is important and worthwhile and gain a sense of satisfaction from all they do in school" (p.129).

Withal (1987) who examined the writings of John Dewey (1859-1952) pointed out that the concept 'learner centered education' could be traced back to this great American educator.

Dewey stated that the learner-oriented process ensured the students' analysis of their experiences and encouraged learners to become more self-directed and self-responsible. Instead of processing facts from books and teacher talk, learning emerges from the learners' processing of their direct experiences. Skills are not acquired by drill and rote memorization but activities that the learners, with the aid of educators, employ to serve their interest and needs. As a result, current dilemmas and tasks are met and dealt with rather than anticipated demands and problems in the future. Educators, Dewey reminded us, have to help individuals to capitalize on the demands of current happenings. It is an article of faith with Dewey that valuable educative outcomes emerge from ongoing day to day activities. He does not overlook, however, the fact that the past can make a substantial contribution to the job of dealing with the present effectively and equipping people for tomorrow's responsibilities (Withal, 1987:327).

Wells (1980), who had done an analysis of teacher centered and learner centered teaching strategies, also stressed the fact that Dewey was the first American educator who advocated a review of the role of the learner in the educational process. He contended that through his writings, Dewey developed and refined the description of the role of a learner in the classroom situation. He was against education systems that view the role of a learner as a mere listener and observer. Dewey, as cited in Wells (1980), stated "... learning arises out of directly experienced situations which have

taken into account the student's capabilities, interests and habits" (p.26).

Fenner (1972) described the characteristics of a learner centered classroom situation as one in which a teacher acts as facilitator to self-guided learners. It is a teaching and learning situation in which the communication pattern is learner to learner to teacher as they work together to seek solutions to problems. Mehaffie, Gee, and Larner (1977) contend that, in a learner centered classroom, the learners are given choices in the teaching and learning situation. On the other hand, Morse (1978) distinguished learner centeredness from teacher centeredness in terms of how active the learners were in the instructional process.

The roots of learner centered education can also be traced back to progressive education and democratic education. This can be discerned from the statement made by (Pates, Good, and Thomson 1983) below:

Teachers using progressive methods basically employ what is known as child centered approach. The children play an active role and participate in the planning of curriculum. Most of the learning is done by discovery methods and group work and co-operation between pupils is encouraged. An emphasis on conventional academic standards is not of prime importance and little testing is used. Subjects are not separated but are integrated wherever this is logical. The teachers see themselves as guides for the children and the providers of tools for them to learn. They encourage self-expression and do not believe that learning takes place within the four walls of the classroom. They do not place emphasis on competition or rewards and punishment as motivation, preferring to sustain interest by involving children in the learning process (p.167-168).

The proponents of progressive education advocating a child centered curriculum took into account the interests and "felt needs" of the learner (McDaniel, 1979:133). They favored an approach to learning that was based on scientific method and reflective thinking. The progressives were also interested in promoting a theory of teaching that viewed the teacher's role as providing active learning experiences so that the child would learn by doing and be challenged to seek solutions in a problem-solving situation.

Kindervatter (1977) pointed out that although learner centered approaches vary, most share the following characteristics:

1. Content and objectives based on learners' needs and presented from the learner's perspective.
2. Methods which catalyze active participation and interaction of learners rather than passive information gathering.
3. Materials that provoke and pose problems, rather than provide answers.
4. Teachers who are not teachers, but facilitators.
5. Learning which is not only cognitive, but also leads to new awareness and behaviors in the learner's lives.

In contrast, Farrant (1980) has outlined the following characteristics of teacher centered approach:

1. Teachers act as essential links between the child and what he is learning.
2. Teachers select what the children learn, the methods by which they learn and the pace at which they learn.

3. Teachers see their role as communicating knowledge to their pupils as efficiently as possible.
4. Teachers spend most of their time actually teaching.
5. Pupils get the impression they can learn only when their teacher is present and teaching.
6. Pupils tend to be regarded as more or less uniform groups of learners rather than as individuals with different gifts and needs.

In a teacher centered education the teacher assumes a role of a director. He/she directs all the matters of learning. The teacher puts much emphasis on what is taught rather than the child who is taught. Education in this sense is seen more as "working through the syllabus" than as trying to help the child develop his potential. Emphasis is also placed on teaching rather than on learning.

Comparing the descriptions of learner centered education in the Namibian context and the description of learner centered education in a global perspective, I agree with Kindervatter (1977) that although the descriptions differ, they somehow share common elements. These common elements were to shape the nature of the new teacher education program in Namibia.

In sum, a learner centered approach to teaching takes the learner as the focal point in the teaching and learning situation. It calls for teachers to use teaching strategies that allow learners' active participation and involvement in their own learning. It also calls for strong interactions between the teacher and the learner and between learners. The learning should not be seen as a burden, but should be enjoyed

by children. Teachers employing a learner centered approach should not act as preachers in the classroom but should facilitate the learning process. Children should be actively involved and be empowered by being given choices to investigate topics of interest which are meaningful to them. This can be done by exposing children to the real world topics which can be done through experiments, field trips and projects which learners can do as an individual, in pairs or groups. The teaching strategies used should be able to promote learning through understanding and foster life long learning in the students.

Teacher Education Programs

Problems that are faced by beginning teachers have profound implications for teacher education programs. Turney et al (1986) looked into the problems and concerns of beginning teachers and assert that teacher education programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the complex and demanding professional world they are about to enter. Many teacher programs put much emphasis on the role of the teacher inside the classroom, especially in terms of whole class teaching while neglecting other important roles and responsibilities teachers perform outside the classroom. Eltis, Towler, and Wright (1986) have emphasized the importance of operating effectively in the following three domains: the classroom, the school, and the community. They believe that if teachers do not learn to operate effectively in each domain, their major task of promoting learning will be limited. For example they

recognized that understanding the child's home background and enlisting the support of parents in their child's education has a significant impact in promoting learning. Carnoy (1985) asserts that one of the problems of teacher education in developing countries is that of deciding whether the training of teachers should emphasize preparation leading to changing or serving the society. He contends that a progressive view of education places the educator and education in the front line of social change while the functionalist view of education places schools in the front line of serving society. The proponents of the progressive education claim that the work place is subservient to the education process. They believe that by shaping young minds in a particular way, education can change society based on the assumption that education operates independently of existing social and work processes. It is up to the educators to educate in ways that go against the traditional hierarchical oppressive type of education (Carnoy 1985).

It is felt that it is of particular importance for all teacher education programs to cover a much broader conception of the teacher's work. From the few research studies that have looked at the problems and concerns of beginning teachers, one cannot fail to see that they entered the field unaware of what they were expected to do. Principals of schools and experienced teachers should also learn to understand the conditions of beginning teachers and try to find ways of supporting and nurturing them. On the other hand, beginning teachers should also be made aware that some of the problems they face are common to all teachers and that it is not a shame to enlist

help from colleagues.

Beginning teachers in global perspectives

Many researchers believe that teachers go through a process of growth from the time they are beginning teachers to the time they become experienced teachers. Researchers have revealed that beginning teacher's beliefs about the teaching and learning situation have an impact on how they teach. Other researchers have concentrated on problems that are faced by beginning teachers which could lead to classroom practices that contradict their beliefs. In addition, some researchers have revealed that beginning teachers need a lot of support during their first few years of teaching. Since this study looked at beginning teachers, the above topics are explored below:

Stages of growth

A study by Fuller and Brown (1975) suggested that teachers develop through three major stages. The first stage is a "me" focus, in which the major concerns are self and survival oriented. Interns and beginning teachers frequently are in this stage. Barnett and Smith (1992) suggest that teachers at this stage are concerned with whether they will teach a good lesson, whether the students would like them how their administrators will evaluate their teaching, and whether they would get a particular lesson organized. This is supported by Olson and Osborne cited in Ryan and Jevne

(1994) who stated that "beginning teachers appear to be more concerned about survival, sense of self and the immediacy of the moment than they are about their students" (p.25). Many researchers assert that first year teachers tend to enter the field concerned about how to organize instructional environments and how to establish general management routines (Ball & Feiman Nemser, 1988; Veenman, 1984). In contrast to experienced teachers who focus on establishing classroom routine, beginning teachers tend to focus on instructional content (Emmer, Everton, & Anderson (1982).

According to Ryan and Jevne (1994), student teachers and beginning teachers speak in "I" sentences. "They talk about their lack of self identity, self confidence and self expression; they ask for administrative and peer support; they expect professional competency immediately. Their concern on process how they will teach leaves little time to consider the person who they will teach" (p.25). According to Ryan and Cooper (1984), beginning teachers focus on the "front stage" behaviors of teaching, those behaviors that are obvious and well known to them and to anyone else who has spent time in the classrooms as a student observing teachers. Most of them are therefore unaware of the complexities of teaching that are hidden from view. However, Olson and Osborne (1991) believe that, once beginning teachers have survived the first year, their focus turns from 'self' to the needs of the students. Lastly, their focus tend to include other important educational issues such as trying out new teaching methods.

Beliefs of beginning teachers

McDiarmid (1990) cited in Rust (1994), claims that beginning teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning are rarely tested in their teacher education programs and that when students appear to consider their beliefs, such changes may be superficial and short-lived. Researchers such as Clark and Peterson (1986), as well as McDiarmid cited in Rust (1994), have found that beginning teachers' beliefs about students, classroom interactions, and subject matter influence the way that they teach. For example, McDiarmid cited in Rust (1994), found that beginning teachers tend to think of mathematics at the elementary level as "simple" and tend to believe that what they do not know, they will learn on the job. Thus they begin teaching operating on the basis of a radically simplified conception.

As a result, many beginning teachers often start teaching without the holistic sense about learning, the classroom, and life in schools that Reynolds 1992, cited in Rust 1994, describes as the "hallmark of thinking" among competent teachers. This is also confirmed by Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1989) who assert that "beginning teachers lack useful understanding of the contexts in which they would work and accurate understandings of themselves as teachers" (p.231). This is further confirmed by the study that was conducted by Rust (1994) who looked at the relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs about teaching and their beliefs in action in their classrooms. The main purpose was to find out whether the teachers' espoused beliefs about teaching were changed as a result of their experiences during the first years. The study focused

on two beginning teachers who were part of the twenty-one participants in a longitudinal study, one was a graduate of a master's program. These two teachers were interviewed in their first year of their teacher education program in an attempt to find out why they chose teaching. The beliefs questionnaire was administered at the beginning of each new year and focused on the participants' reasons for entering the field of teaching and their articulation of their understandings of the nature of teaching, learning, schooling, and the purposes of education. In addition, the participants were asked to keep journals which were exchanged monthly and provided the researchers with insight into participants' thinking about teaching, their courses and their work in their classrooms as student teachers.

The findings of this study showed that, when they began, both undergraduate and graduate participants were idealistic about teaching, although the undergraduate students held beliefs about teaching which were less complex and more full of contradiction than those of graduate students. They found however, that by the second year, the beliefs of the undergraduate and graduate students had become quite similar especially in the areas of the aims of education, student-teacher relationship, curriculum and teaching. By the third year of their study both undergraduate and graduate students were espousing almost identical beliefs about teaching. For example, they both believed in the importance of education and considered teaching as a high calling. They all saw the aims of education as building the child's self-esteem, self-confidence and fostering life-long learning. They also felt that curriculum should be

relevant and should cover the basic skills essential for life and citizenship. They both shared the images of the teacher as a facilitator, role model, and motivator. They also felt that teaching should be interactive and designed to foster independence among learners. They saw a learner as the constructor of knowledge. They both offered little commentary on student-teacher and home school relationships except that these relationships should be positive and characterized by mutual respect, trust and caring (Rust, 1994). They felt that educational leadership should be shared by teachers, administrators, and parents. Judging by their responses to the beliefs questionnaire and in interviews, Rust (1994) concluded that the two teachers who were the focus of his study entered their first year of teaching espousing a set of beliefs that were congruent with those of their peers in the participating pre-service programs.

Rust (1994) collected data for the two teachers through dialogue journals kept by the two teachers, conversations with them, and through observing their classroom practices. His findings indicated that, despite the differences in the settings and their preparation for teaching, there were many similarities in the two beginning teachers he studied. Rust (1994) found that both were teaching in environments familiar to them; the districts and the schools in which they had grown up. Both held images of the learner as a constructor of knowledge. They all believed that teachers and schools should have high expectations for children. Both believed that every child can learn. Both got their job at the last minute; neither had time to prepare. They both had experienced tremendous anxiety about finding a job. Both needed work and were

proud to have found jobs. Both alternated between euphoria and panic when they got their jobs. Both felt insecure about their expertise. In the beginning, both made the mistake of trying to do too much. Both entered schools that were unprepared to nurture beginning teachers. they had schedules that gave them little consistent contact with their own classrooms. They were both given "difficult" children rejected by other teachers and little support for managing them. Neither of them anticipated the discipline problems that confronted them during their first months. Nor did they anticipate or feel prepared for the burden of paper work and planning that comes with teaching. Both blamed their pre-service program for not having prepared them adequately to handle management and discipline issues.

He also found that both experienced tremendous loneliness and insecurity. There was conflict between their need to be in control and their belief in interactive learning. confrontations with children over things like bathroom use became power struggles which left them feeling angry and ashamed. Both ended up behaving in ways that were inconsistent with their image of a good teacher. For example one of the teachers believed that she would never yell at her students, but to her surprise she found herself constantly doing so until the parents reported her to the principal for being harsh to their children. As beginners they were unaware of the school politics. They were both surprised by the lack of collegiality among their peers; they therefore learned quickly not to trust anyone, especially not the principal. They both feared of being perceived as inadequate and they thus refrained from asking help from their

colleagues. They therefore experienced loneliness, insecurity, and depression. The two teachers learned that evaluation of their teaching was to be based on children's behavior in school and performance tests. According to Rust (1994), this discovery made one of the two teachers abandon the learner-centered approach which is associated with mess and noise and also because it made her move at a slow rate while there was too much work to cover before the tests.

Rust (1994) believes that these findings point to the importance of the principal as educational and moral leader in the school who can establish a climate of support and acceptance for new teachers. He suggests that the issue of power, politics, and leadership in school should be integral to discussions about schools and experiences in schools in pre-service programs. Rust (1994) asserts that his findings call into question the basic curriculum of teacher education. The teachers in his study, for example, blamed their teacher education programs as being inadequate for the real work of schools. The question that needs to be answered is whether the first graduates of the BETD program in Namibia will feel adequately prepared for the teacher's world of work.

Problems faced by beginning teachers

The first year of teaching has been described as an emotional roller coaster, filled with peaks of exhilaration and dips of discouragement. The first year is a year of great intensity for the beginning teacher. It is intense

because of the unexpected demands presented by teaching and because of the surprises that reside in what was thought to be familiar world-the classroom. Some of the intensity comes from the problems confronted by the teacher; some comes from the satisfaction in solving those problems and in succeeding as a professional. The surprise of the first year of teaching are wrapped in everyday boxes-some contains sweet treasures and other hold boobytraps (Ryan and cooper, 1984:264).

many teacher educators have recognized the significant impact the first year of teaching has on a teacher's future professional development (Lacey, 19077; Lortie, 1975; Rust, 1994; and Turney et al, 1986). The first year of teaching has been described as 'trial by fire' a time during which many beginning teachers "sink or swim" (Lortie, 1975). Beginning teachers must learn to teach while they are teaching; they are both learners and teachers. To this point in time, research on the problems of beginning teachers provides little knowledge as why beginning teachers have certain problems occur in some situations and not in others, and what steps can be taken to prevent them. Kuzmic (1994) points out that research on the problems of beginning teachers has failed to move beyond the basic question, "What problems do beginning teachers experience?" and the provision of general suggestions for addressing these problems. Kuzmic (1994) suggests that comprehensive ecological descriptions of the "who, what, when, why, and where" in the lives of beginning teachers are clearly needed, with the beginning teacher accorded a more central role in the inquiry process.

Similarly, the first year of teaching is viewed as difficult by many researchers (Dow, 1979; Fullan, 1982; Goodman, 1987; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975). Many novice teachers are overwhelmed by all the "firsts" they must face in that year in order to survive it.

It is often a year filled with frustration, anxiety, and doubt. The novices attempt to integrate their idealistic assumptions about teaching with classroom realities. Novices must develop a role identity that may or may not fit with previous (Olson and Osborne, 1991 p.331).

They believe that some of the common difficulties experienced are things that college educators spend little or no time explaining. Practical basics such as how to handle the first day of school, or how to plan for the first field trip may not have been addressed. Many teachers have been frustrated during their first year of teaching and some have even left the teaching profession because of lack of confidence and a feeling of inadequacy even though they originally felt confident after completing their teacher training program. Olson and Osborne (1991) assert that increased knowledge of how the transition from student teachers to teachers as experienced by beginning teachers may help teacher educators to improve in their role of preparing future teachers.

Turney, Eltis, and Wright (1986) assert that, all too often, student teachers gain a rather narrow impression of the teacher's work. Teacher education programs largely focus on the teacher's roles in the classroom, especially in terms of full class teaching, neglecting the important roles and responsibilities teachers perform outside the

classroom in the school and its community. It is not enough for programs to just propose ideas about the teacher's many sided responsibilities both inside and outside the classrooms. According to Turney et al (1986), student teachers should be exposed to the real life experiences of the teacher's work which they are expected to carry out once they complete their teacher program.

The literature describing and analyzing teachers' work clearly reveals the complex and demanding professional world of teachers. Teacher education programs in general do not adequately prepare teachers for this complexity. This inadequacy is confirmed by research on the concerns and problems of young teachers. "Results of various studies of the experiences of beginning teachers have shown considerable consistency regarding their problems" (Turney et al (1986, p.5).

According to Turney et al (1986), although the most common problems seem to lie within the classroom, with emphasis on such issues as classroom management, locating and using resources and evaluating learning, some studies have, however, indicated relationships outside the classroom with parents and colleagues in the school and its community to be an area of concern for beginning teachers. Even after one year of teaching, teachers continue to identify interpersonal relationships as the greatest source of serious problems, especially teacher-administrator relationships. Turney et al (1986) assert that if beginning teachers are to feel comfortable with those around them they need to undergo these experiences in their teacher education program. This will help young teachers to develop positive interpersonal relationships with

administrators, colleagues, and the parents, who might enhance their work as teachers. They further pointed out that "experienced teachers, too, will benefit from involvement in programs which will increase both their knowledge of those sources of help available to them and their understanding of how to enlist this potential help" (p.7).

Turney et al (1986:6) summarized selected research on beginning teachers' needs, problems and concerns as follows:

Wey (1951) identified handling problems of pupil control and management, adjusting to deficiencies in school equipment, physical conditions, and material, adjusting to the teaching load, adapting to needs, interests and abilities of pupils, motivating pupils' interest and response. Dropkin & Taylor (1963) identified discipline, relations with parents, methods of evaluating teaching, planning, material and resources, and classroom routines. Taylor & Dale (1971) discovered the following problems and concerns, dealing with wide ability groups, not being aware of children's previous learning, lack of particular teaching techniques, and individual discipline problems. Coates & Thorensen (1976) pointed to the following problems and concerns, the ability to maintain discipline in the classroom, concern whether pupils like them or not, knowledge of subject matter, concern about what should be done if mistakes are made in class or if not enough teaching material has been prepared and concern about how to relate personally to other faculty members, the school system, and parents. Some Australian studies identified the following; adapting teaching to individual learner's needs (Tisher et al., 1979; Telfer, 1979, 1982; Otto et al, 1979); teaching slow

learners and teaching immigrant children (Tisher et al., 1979); organizing group work which is often suggested in pre-service training as a desirable practice (Scriven & Shaw, 1977); reviewing and assessing instruction (Tisher, 1979); imposing classroom control (Scriven & Shaw, 1977; Tisher et al, 1979; Telfer, 1982; Otto et al, 1979); applying social skills (Campbell et al, 1979); problems with parents such as conflicts, communication obstacles, criticism (Telfer, 1982); creating interest in the topic being taught (Telfer, 1982); locating resources, including persons and materials (Tisher, 1979; Otto et al, 1979) and motivating pupils (Otto et al, 1979).

Although these studies were carried out in developed countries, some of the above problems may be experienced by beginning teachers of the BETD teacher program in Namibia.

Veenman (1984) contends that beginning teachers in developing countries tend to face problems related to discipline, motivating pupils, dealing with individual differences, assessing children's work, relationship with parents, organization of class work, insufficient and or inadequate teaching material and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual pupil. These challenges are quite consistent with those identified by researchers in several countries. It is logical to assume that as one of the developing countries, many Namibian teachers are faced with the above problems identified by Veenman in 1984.

From the researcher's personal experience as an assistant elementary teacher for two years as well as a secondary school teacher for seven years in Namibian

schools, nearly all the problems listed by Veenman (1984) were experienced by the researcher. The only two problems the researcher did not experience are those concerning assessing children's work and relationship with parents. This could be attributed to the fact that assessing children's work was not taken very seriously in many Namibian schools before independence. The education system during the colonial period was very examination oriented. What mattered most then was the child's performance on the examination. A possible explanation for my not experiencing problems dealing with "relationship with parents" could be attributed to the fact that parents were not very much involved in the education of their children.

Support for beginning teachers

Hayes & Kilgore (1990) did a study on seven beginning elementary teachers. The purpose of their study was to find out how beginning teachers construct their interactions and employ them to master the curriculum, understand the grade level being taught, and gain control of classrooms. All participants in their study were elementary school teachers and graduated from the University of Florida. These teachers were interviewed three times about their first year of teaching experience. Hayes and Kilgore's findings indicate that four of the teachers expected to get support and assistance from other teachers. On the other hand, three of these seven teachers were reluctant to share problems and concerns with others for fear of being labelled as incompetent. These three teachers believed that if they were good teachers they

should not be having problems. Many teacher researchers have concluded that beginning teachers withdraw into isolation in order to survive their first year and "pass the test" (Johnston and Ryan, 1985; Lortie, 1975). Rosenholtz (1989) cited in Hayes et al (1990), found that isolation results when teachers try to protect their self esteem and cast themselves in the best possible light. She claims that professional growth has profound implications especially for beginners: They rely primarily on their ability to identify problems, develop solutions and choose the best alternative. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) cited in Hayes et al (1990), assert that "the uncertainties of teaching are exacerbated by the fact that teachers cannot turn to one another for help and support."

Analysis of the findings shows that beginning teachers who pursued collegial interaction were also the most reflective thinkers. Their professional development was nurtured by the peer teacher, and the habit of critically examining practices was established. During their interviews, the four teachers easily explored a variety of explanations of classroom events, a range of alternatives, and both intended and unintended consequences of their practices. By contrast, they found the three teachers who were isolated identified a narrow range of explanations of classroom events, chose and implemented one strategy, and were wary of openness and unintended consequences. According to Hayes & Kilgore these three teachers persistently felt the need to project to their colleagues an image of competency, of being in control of their classrooms and therefore not needing supportive assistance from other teachers. These

three teachers felt that if they seek help they will be viewed as incompetent and therefore they had to pretend that they did not have problems in their classrooms in order to be perceived as 'good teachers'. However Blakey et al, (1989) believe that novice teachers are afraid to ask for help because they feel they don't have anything to give the experienced teacher in return. Several researchers (Everett-Turner, 1985; Lacey, 1977; and Lortie, 1975) have noted that many beginning teachers turn to an experienced teacher as a mentor especially one who is teaching at the same grade level. They also believe that these interactions are very important for the survival of the novice teacher.

Teacher preparation for a learner centered approach

In order to support the implementation of a learner centered approach, a new teacher education program (BETD) founded on a learner centered approach was implemented in four Namibian colleges (Windhoek College of Education, Ongwediva College of Education, Rundu College of Education and Caprivi College of Education).

Farrant's (1980) clear distinction between child centered education and teacher centered education have significant implications for teacher education programs.

Child centered education is the name applied to philosophical approach to schooling that recognized the importance of matching the content and methods of children's learning to what is known of child development and the basic needs and characteristics of children. Teacher centered education is applied to forms

of education in which the teacher dominates the learning process by determining what is taught, how it is taught, and the sequence and pace of the teaching. In teacher centered education, the teacher exercises a major influence on the kind of education that is offered, while pupils have only a minor say in shaping their education (p.127).

Wells (1980:43) did an analysis of teacher centered and learner centered teaching strategies in method courses, classroom instruction, and selected secondary social studies textbooks. His respondents were required to classify the following instruments into teacher centered or learner centered category in the teaching of Social Studies:

1. Oral presentation
2. Student silent reading period
3. Structured discussion and questioning
4. Resource person presentation
5. Audio-visual presentation
6. Student written work
7. Student oral presentation
8. Student creative productions
9. Simulated situations
10. Out of building experiences
11. Extemporaneous occurrences
12. Dramatization

The first five items were categorized as teacher centered while item 6 to 12 were classified as learner centered. Wells' population sample consisted of 18 social studies educators, secondary teachers of American history (140) and world history (140) and 19 methods course instructors. After conducting interviews and classroom observations of Oklahoma secondary social studies teachers and method instructors, he found that most secondary social studies teachers who were teaching in Oklahoma public schools were using more teacher centered teaching techniques than learner centered teaching techniques. Teachers were utilizing more of those instructional practices which were categorized as teacher centered than those identified as learner centered. Another finding of his study is that most of the secondary social studies teachers who were teaching in Oklahoma during the time of his study were not following the suggestions in the textbook on how to teach certain topics. Wells (1980) asserted that the use of teacher centered or learner centered teaching techniques was not in any way influenced by sex, textbook used, or organizational affiliation. However he noted that age and years of teaching experience have some influence on the use of learner centered teaching techniques. His study also revealed that methods course instructors promoted the use of learner centered teaching techniques less than is advocated by the secondary social studies textbooks used by the majority of the teachers they were training.

Rubadeau (1967) did a comparison study of learner centered and teacher centered learning. The main aim of his study was to find out whether there were

differences in the effectiveness and efficiency between the learner centered learning (discovery), teacher centered learning (reception), and no instructor learning (independent study). The participants in the study were first year students who were enrolled in general Psychology course at the State University College, Geneseo, New York. A design using randomization of subjects and control group was used. To test the relationship between method of instruction, effectiveness and efficiency of learning, Rubadeau (1967) measured the relationship between preference for instructional method, ability level and the actual method of instruction, by making use of the scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Methods of instruction were assessed using effectiveness and efficiency criterion measures. Analysis of variance and covariance were the main statistical methods he employed. Five dependent variables were utilized of which two measured the effectiveness: a 100-item objectives test of knowledge about the course was administered prior to the beginning and at the end of the instruction; a 50- item objective test designed to assess knowledge of the principles of learning a unit within a course was administered at the beginning of the course. The same 50- item test, but rearranged in different order was administered immediately following the unit dealing with principles of learning. The learning post-test was administered nine weeks later at the end of the course. Efficiency was measured by the amount of study time recorded in the study learning logs. Two reaction scales were used to obtain a quantitative measure of students' reaction to the teaching methods.

The findings of Rubadeau's (1967) study indicated that the learner centered (discovery) group learned more efficiently than the teacher centered (reception) group. The differences in effectiveness as measured by the total test, learning test and learning post-test were not significant for the three methods of instruction. Differences in student reactions to instructional techniques as measured by the reaction scale were not significant between any of the three instructional methods.

When students were categorized on the basis of their preference for instructional mode, no differences were found between those preferring learner centered learning and those preferring teacher centered learning. When students were categorized on the basis of scholastic aptitude into high and low ability level, the high ability students in each instructional method performed significantly better on all effectiveness and efficiency measures than students of low ability. Rubadeau pointed out that the discovery instructional approach was not only more efficient for the students but was also quite efficient for the instructor. The reason being that the discovery method allowed the instructor to work with the students on an individual basis, "... the technique was very efficient in that it cost only slightly more instructor time than that involved in reception learning (Rubadeau 1967 : vii). He pointed out that the study revealed that those students preferring the learner centered learning performed better, although not significantly, on all measures of effectiveness and efficiency.

CHAPTER 3

THE STUDY

In order to investigate the perceptions and beliefs of the first graduates of the BETD program in regard to the implementation of a learner centered approach, an appropriate methodology had to be selected. A qualitative methodology seemed appropriate as it involves direct observation of human activity in a naturalistic setting. Within qualitative research methods, a case study was most suitable as the study focused on graduates from one College with specialization in Early Childhood Education (grades 1-4). In addition, a case study has an added advantage of accommodating research instruments from both qualitative and quantitative research. Merriam (1988) states that "case study is a basic design that can accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives, as well as philosophical perspectives on the nature of research itself. A case study can test theory or build on theory, incorporate random or purposive sampling, and include quantitative and qualitative data" (p.2).

This chapter will essentially deal with the research design and the description of methodology that was used in conducting the study. Researchers caution that in choosing the methodology and research techniques, the researcher should try to select the one which would be most helpful in answering the research questions.

A qualitative case study would enable the researcher to explore the following research questions:

- i) Would the first graduates of the BETD program implement the learner centered teaching strategies in their classrooms?
- ii) Are they well prepared and confident to introduce a learner centered approach?
- iii) Would they be influenced to use teacher directed methods?
- iv) What problems would be encountered by beginning teachers in using a learner centered approach?

The questions were based on the following assumptions:

- i) that the participants would be able to successfully implement a learner centered approach if their philosophy and understanding of the approach is consistent with how it is viewed in the Broad curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma and in other Namibian documents.
- ii) that the participants would only feel confident to apply a learner centered approach if they were also taught in this way and were exposed to it during their school based studies.
- iii) that the participants would implement a learner centered approach if it is favored by other staff members.
- iv) that the participants might abandon using a learner centered teaching strategies if they encounter many problems.

Another reason for using a qualitative case study was to take advantage of employing multiple instruments. Merriam (1988) contends that "quantitative data from surveys or other instruments can be used to support findings from qualitative data. The opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection is a major strength of case study research" (pp. 68-69). Denzin (1970) pointed out that the use of various methods of collecting data is in fact a form of triangulation. By making use of a variety of data collection tools in this study, validity and reliability will be enhanced.

Qualitative methodologies

The following section will review the literature supporting the research methodology selected for use in this study.

Filstead (1970) described qualitative methodology as follows:

Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, field work, etc., which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to get close to the data, thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself (p.6).

Rist (1980) and Patton (1990) contend that qualitative research paradigms are those methodologies that stress "understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behavior, the context of social interactions, an empathetic understanding of subjective

states, and the connection between the subjective states and behavior" (p. 7).

Similarly, Creswell (1994) defined a qualitative study "as an inquiry process of understanding of social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p.2).

Denzin (1989) maintains that a qualitative or naturalistic research paradigm is much preferred over the others because it gives a "thick description of the people, places, and conversations." This therefore gives an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) qualitative research in an umbrella term that includes several research strategies which share the following characteristics:

- i) Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
- ii) Qualitative research is descriptive.
- iii) Qualitative researchers are concerned with process in a setting rather than simply with outcome or products.
- iv) Qualitative researchers tend to analyze data inductively.
- v) Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (pp. 27-29).

Taking into account the advice of Denzin (1989) and the statement by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) the researcher felt that within the qualitative paradigm the case study seemed best suited to this research.

Case Studies

This is where a researcher examines or "explores a single entity or phenomenon ("the case") bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time" (Creswell 1994:12).

Snow and Anderson (1991) have outlined and described the characteristics of case studies as follows:

- i) **Holistic analysis of bounded systems of action.**

Case studies strive toward a relatively holistic understanding of cultural systems of action. Case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues or processes that are fundamental to understanding the system being studied.

- ii) **Multi-perspectival or polyphonic analyzes.**

This means in practical terms, that the researcher(s) consider(s) not only the voices and experiences of the range of actors of focal concern but also the perspectives and actions of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction among them.

- iii) **Triangulated research.**

This refers to the use of multiple data sources, methods, investigators, and the theoretical perspectives in the study of some empirical phenomenon.

- iv) **Capturing social processes.**

This facilitates the possibility of capturing and analyzing events and happenings, interactions and relationships, and groups and institutions as they emerge and evolve across time.

v) Open-ended research and serendipitous findings.

Case studies tend to have an open-ended, emergent quality that facilitates the discovery of both the unanticipated findings and data sources. Serendipity is the discover, by chance or sagacity, of valid results which were not sought for (pp. 152-163).

Merriam (1988) asserts that qualitative case study can be defined as "as intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources (p. 16).

Patton (1985) cited in Merriam (1988) pointed out that qualitative research strives

to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting-what is means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meaning are, what the world looks like in that particular setting-and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding (pp. 16-17).

Most of the explanation of several advocates of case studies (Creswell 1994, Merriam 1988, Snow and Anderson 1991) were taken into account in this study. For example, the 'case' in this study are the first Early Childhood graduates of the BETD from Caprivi College of Education. The study did not include all other aspects and participants of the BETD program but concentrated on one aspect, namely; the perceptions of the beginning teachers about learner centered approaches to teaching.

Creswell (1994) pointed out that a case study can be a 'process' or 'a social group'. The study participants as well as the study itself went through a 'process'. In December 1995, the study focused on the final year student teachers in the Early Childhood focus. The same group was followed when they began teaching in January 1996. The 'process' is from being student teachers to beginning teachers. Creswell (1994) stated that 'the case' can be 'a social group'. This study involved 'a social group' which is the first graduates of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) who specialized to teach in grades 1-4. Another aspect of a case study that was taken into account is the use of 'variety of data collection procedures'. Although the major instruments in data collection were questionnaires, other sources were used such as documents analysis, observations and interviews.

The following four research questions guided the study

- i) Would the first graduates of the BETD program implement learner centered teaching strategies in their classroom?
- ii) Are they well prepared and confident to introduce learner centered approaches?
- iii) Would they be influenced to use teacher directed methods?
- iv) What problems would be encountered by beginning teachers in using a learner centered approach?

Procedure

The main aim of this study was to identify the perceptions held by final year students

in the BETD program about the adequacy of their preparation; their understanding of a learner centered approach and how they feel about it; whether they plan to introduce it in their classrooms; and what their initial few months of teaching were like. An initial questionnaire was administered to student teachers specializing to teach in grades 1-4 just as they completed their three year teacher education program, with a second questionnaire administered during their third month of teaching. The study also sought to find out whether or not these students were actually using learner centered approaches in their classrooms. This information was obtained through observations of the classroom practice of two beginning teachers as well as through interviewing them on a weekly basis throughout a period of three months. The problems, experiences, and concerns, experienced during their first three months of teaching were obtained through a second questionnaire administered to all new Early Childhood graduates of the BETD program.

Data

The data in this study can be regarded as three phases through which the study had progressed. Although the participants in each phase were the same group, it should be noted that either the status of the participants or the number of the participants involved were not the same.

Phase 1

The first phase of the study dealt with all the 10 student teachers who were specializing to teach at a lower primary level at Caprivi College of Education. The first questionnaire was administered to this group as they just about to complete their teacher education program in December 1995.

Phase 2

This phase involved interviewing and observing three beginning teachers from Phase 1. Four of the final year students in phase 1 volunteered to be interviewed and observed once they started teaching. However, due to transportation problems, only two beginning teachers were interviewed and observed during their first three months of teaching from January to March 1996.

Phase 3

Phase three participants were all 10 participants in phase 1 and were now beginning teachers. These were the respondents to the second questionnaire. Nine of the ten respondents were placed in village schools.

Instruments

The following research methods were used in collecting data:

- i) Questionnaires

- ii) Observations
- iii) Interviews
- iv) Document analysis

Questionnaires

Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen (1989) claim that a survey can be used to measure many things such as attitudes and preferences, beliefs and predictions as well as facts and past behavioral experiences. The questionnaire is divided into five sections and covers questions aimed at measuring beliefs, attitudes, and facts concerning implementation of a learner centered approach (see Appendix A).

Two questionnaires with open ended and closed ended questions were designed for this study. The first questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to all final year students specializing for Grades 1-4 at Caprivi College. This was administered during their last month at college (December 1995). The second questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered to all beginning teachers of the BETD program teaching in grades 1-4 in Caprivi Region during their third month of teaching (March 1996). The first Questionnaire was mailed to the Rector of Caprivi College to be administered and collected by the college staff. The second questionnaire was delivered and collected by the researcher for seven participants while three were posted to the respondents due to distance and transport problems.

Many researchers provided extensive literature on the mechanics of designing and implementing questionnaires, and analyzing their data (Borg and Gall, 1983; Hartman and Hedblom 1979; Van Dalen 1979). Their recommendations were taken into consideration. The questionnaire instrument was designed with the help of relevant experts and much attention was given to the development of suitable questions which addressed the issues under investigation. Bell (1987) asserts that "all data gathering instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable you to remove any items which do not yield usable data" (p. 65).

To ensure reliability of the instrument used, the researcher piloted the first questionnaire with students in the Early Childhood focus at the University of Alberta before administering it to the participants in this study. This was very helpful in determining the clarity of the questions asked and the length of time needed for completing the questionnaires.

Observation

Conducting observations in the classroom of two beginning teachers was useful in validating information from the first questionnaire and the interviews. The classroom observations also allowed me to observe the teaching methods used and to witness some of the problems encountered by teachers.

Best and Kahn (1986) outlined the characteristics of good observations as follows:

- a) Observations are carefully planned, systematic, and perceptive. Observers know what they are looking for and what is irrelevant in a situation. They are not distracted by the dramatic or the spectacular.
- b) Observers are aware of the wholeness of what is observed. Although they are alert to significant details, they know that the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts.
- c) Observers are objective. They recognize their likely biases, and they strive to eliminate their influence upon what they see and report.
- d) Observers separate the facts from the interpretation of the facts. They observe the facts and make their interpretations at a later time.
- e) Observations are checked and verified, whenever possible by repetition, or by comparison with those of other competent observers.
- f) Observations are carefully and expertly recorded. Observers use appropriate instruments to systematize, quantify, and preserve the results of their observations.

There are three possible roles that a researcher may assume during the observation. The researcher may choose to be a complete participant observe. In this capacity, the researcher is fully involved in the activities of those being observed. Another role is that of being a participant as observer in which the observer participates in the activities of the group, but also makes observations. Lastly, the researcher can assume the role of being a complete observer which means that he/she observes the activities of the group in any way without becoming involved in the activities of the researched.

In this study, the role of participant as observer was used to collect data. This required me to participate in some of the classroom activities. Spradley (1980) contends that the participant as observer enters social situations with two purposes in mind. One is to engage in activities appropriate to the social situation, and another reason is to observe the activities, the people and the physical aspects of the social situation and to record data accurately. The method of participant observation entails personal involvement in the situation which allows a detailed description of the situation under investigation. The classroom observations of two beginning teachers were conducted on a weekly basis for a period of three months. Detailed observations were recorded in a note book by the researcher. The researcher also made use of an audio tape recorder in order to supplement and add to the information recorded in the note book.

Interviews

Many researchers agree that interviews generate more information since people tend to talk more freely than they write (Spradley, 1979; Fetterman, 1989). Interviews permitted the researcher to probe more deeply into the concerns and problems of the two beginning teachers as well as getting their views concerning the learner centered approach. The advantages of interviews are summarized by Bell (1987) as follows:

Major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do. The way

in which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation, etc.) can provide information that a written response would conceal. Questionnaire responses have to be taken at face value, but a response in an interview can be developed and clarified (p. 71).

The format of the interviews were semi-structured; questions were not asked in any particular order but care was taken that all the basic information needed was addressed. The sequence of questions was determined by the participants' readiness and willingness to take up a topic as it arises (Fetterman, 1989). According to Gay (1976), "semi-structured interviews are flexible and yield more accurate and honest responses since they allow the investigator to explain and clarify questions without losing focus: (p. 134). Borg and Gall (1983) noted that "semi-structured interviews permit the use of initial and follow up responses, thus allowing the interviewer to better understand the respondents' opinions and reasons behind them" (p. 442). All interviews were audio taped and transcribed as soon as was possible.

In summary, interviews are considered as an important source of data in qualitative case studies as it helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon. The interviewer has an opportunity to ask questions to probe or clarify some points. In addition, Merriam (1988) pointed out that:

Interviewing, especially semi structured and unstructured formats, fares well when compared to other data collection techniques in terms of the validity of the information obtained. There is ample opportunity to probe for clarification and ask questions appropriate to the respondent's knowledge, involvement, and status.

The interviews also provides for continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer, allowing him to redirect, probe, and summarize (p.86).

Document analysis

Documents can provide information which is relevant to the issues and problems under investigation. For this study, documents related to the Basic Education Teacher Diploma such as the Broad Curriculum for the Teacher Education Program and the report of the college monitoring group on the implementation of learner centered approach were very useful sources of data. Many researchers agree that documents are a very useful and important source of data in many areas of investigation. According to Best and Kahn (1986), document analysis can serve a useful purpose in yielding information that is helpful in evaluating or explaining social or educational practices. This is also confirmed by Eisner (1991) when he claimed that documents can be a useful form of data in qualitative research because "they reveal what people will or cannot say" (p. 184). Some of the Namibian documents studied revealed the concerns and problems of student teachers of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, as well as teacher educators' concerns regarding a learner centered approach.

Data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) claim that in a qualitative study, data analysis can start as soon as data collection begins. This supported by Merriam (1988) who stated that:

The final product of a case study is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating (p.124).

In this study, analysis of data was an ongoing process from the moment the first questionnaire was received in order to identify themes which served as guidelines in formulating questions for the interviews with the two teachers. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible to identify themes and further questions. Data analysis was therefore carried out throughout and after data collection. Bell (1987) contends that "data collected by means of questionnaires, interviews, diaries or any other method mean very little until they are analyzed and assessed" (p.102). Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution that, in data analysis, it is important to begin with the smallest unit of information that can be interpreted on its own. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) concede that data analysis "involves working with data, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). Merriam (1988) cautions that data analysis "is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (p. 147). Taking into account the above

recommendations, the responses from the first questionnaire^a were used in formulating questions for the interviews in order to elaborate and clarify some of the responses. Data from different sources were compared in order to determine some similarities and contradictions. The data was also analyzed by taking into account the four main research questions the study was attempting to answer. The use of more than one instrument was therefore very beneficial to this study.

Ethical Considerations

A letter was sent to the Ministry of Education and Culture to seek permission to conduct a study of this nature. Letters of permission were also sent to the Rector of the College concerned, and to the Director of Education in the Caprivi region. Every effort was made to minimize the identification of the participants in this study. Pseudonyms were used for the two teachers who were interviewed and observed. The participants in the study were voluntarily willing to be observed and interviewed. The participants in the study were voluntarily willing to be observed and interviewed. The participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

^a refers to first questionnaire administered in December 1995 (Appendix A)

Delimitation

This study was delimited to one of the four colleges in Namibia offering the BETD program. Within that college, only final year student teachers specializing for grades 1-4 participated in the study. From this group, only two teachers were interviewed and observed in their classroom setting during their first three months of teaching. These parameters were set to make the study manageable in terms of distance and research fund constraints.

Limitations

Although the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) was implemented at four colleges in four different regions, for practical purposes this study was focused on one College. Within this College only student teachers in Early Childhood focus were included. The study did not attempt to include teacher educators' perspectives.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Today's teachers are the first people we should turn to when we want to find the answer to the question: Is the present training system producing the right sort of teachers? They can spell out how the theory of their three-year college course failed to prepare them for the daily struggle to control, and communicate with forty pupils in a draughty classroom. They can say whether the practice they were given was long, or varied, enough. They can tell us if our schools and colleges are failing them (Kemble, 1971:13).

This chapter will initially describe the questionnaire respondents and the two teachers observed and interviewed and then go on to present the findings from the questionnaire data.

Participants

The respondents of the first questionnaire^a were final year student teachers at Caprivi College of Education who were specializing to teach in grades 1-4. The questionnaire was administered during their last month at the College (December 1995). The sample consisted of ten participants, of whom eight were females and two were males. Of the seven questionnaires returned, six were from females and one was from a male. Four respondents were in the age group 24-28 years; two in the 29-33 age group; and one in the 18-23 age group. The purpose of looking at age groups was

to determine whether there were noticeable differences between the younger and older respondents in their perception of a learner centered approach, and whether any age group was more enthusiastic about a learner centered approach than the other. No differences were noted on either of these points.

Five of the respondents had passed grade 12 before enrolling into the BETD teacher program. Two of the respondents had grade 10 plus credit courses in grade 12. The academic qualifications of the respondents is consistent with the academic requirement for admission into the BETD program; i.e. the minimum academic entrance is grade 10, while grade 12 is the preferred level. In the near future, grade 12 will be the required entrance grade level.

Five of the seven respondents were not employed prior to enrolling into the BETD program, while two were employed as temporary teachers before enrolling into the BETD program. None of the seven respondents had any other diploma or degree prior to enrolling into the program. All of them entered the program as unqualified teachers and without any other qualifications.

Four of the seven respondents chose "interest in the teaching profession" as their main reason for enrolling into the BETD program. Two respondents indicated that they enrolled into the program because of "its emphasis on the learner centered approach. Only one respondent mentioned that (s)he enrolled into the BETD program because (s)he wants to share knowledge with the learners.

The respondents to the second questionnaire consisted of the same ten participants who were respondents to the first questionnaire and were now employed as teachers. Seven questionnaires were delivered and collected by the researcher in March 1996. The remaining three were mailed to the participants filled out and returned by mail. Unlike with the first questionnaire where three did not return the questionnaire, there was a 100% return in the second questionnaire although one questionnaire had one page missing on the demographic information. The high return rate might be attributed to the fact that seven questionnaires were personally delivered and collected by the researcher in March 1996. Another possible explanation could be that the participants were eager to share their initial experiences as teachers.

Like in the case of the first questionnaire, the purpose of looking at the age was to determine whether one group was more enthusiastic about a learner centered approach, again there was no noticeable differences between age groups detected.

In responding to the question why they decided to become teachers, five of the ten respondents indicated that it was out of interest in the teaching profession that they decided to join teaching. Four of the respondents pointed out that they joined teaching because of their love for children. On the other hand, one respondent indicated that one reason he/she decided to become a teacher was prompted by the fact that there are few qualified lower primary teachers in Namibia. "I decided to become a teacher because there is a problem of scarcity of qualified teachers especially at lower primary

level." Another respondent indicated that he chose teaching as a career because he is interested in sharing knowledge with students and other teachers.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether their school was located in a town or in a rural area. Namibia is geographically divided into 13 regions (provinces). This study was conducted in the Caprivi region which is in the Northeastern part of Namibia. There is only one town in this region and most of the people (and schools) are in the rural areas. The College attended by the participants is located in the one town (Katima Mulilo). It is therefore understandable that the demand for teachers would be in the rural areas and this explains why 90% of the respondents were positioned in the rural areas.

In response to item 6 (see Appendix B), nine out of ten indicated that they were teaching in rural schools. Only one respondent was teaching at a school located in town. The purpose of this item was to find out whether both teachers in town and in rural areas would experience similar problems that could impede the implementation of a learner centered approach. It was noted that in response to item 11 (see Appendix B), the nine respondents who indicated that their schools were in rural areas also indicated that they encountered problems in trying to implement a learner centered approach whereas the respondent whose school was located in town indicated that she did not have any problem with regard to implementing a learner centered approach. In item 12 (see Appendix B) which required the respondents to indicate whether their views about learner centered approaches have changed since they started teaching, the

teacher located in town is one of the six respondents out of ten who indicated that their views have not changed since they started teaching.

Respondents were also required to indicate the grade level they were teaching to find out whether these graduates who specialized to teach grades 1-4, were assigned the appropriate grade level in terms of their specialization. Three of the respondents were assigned to teach grade 3; another three of the respondents were teaching in grade 4; one was assigned to teach grade 1, one was teaching grades 2 and 5 and one was teaching grades 4 and 5. There is a possibility that the teacher who indicated that she is teaching grades 2 and 5 was not teaching a combined grade but was teaching specific subjects in grade 2 and in grade 5. Whereas in the last case of the respondent who indicated that he was teaching grades 4 and 5, there could be two possibilities: i) teaching combined grades or ii) being responsible for certain subjects in grade 4 and in grade 5. Only two of the ten respondents were responsible for the grades belong their grade 1-4 specialization. A letter inviting respondents to volunteer to be interviewed and observed during their first three months of teaching was attached to Questionnaire # 1 (See Appendix C). Four beginning teachers volunteered to be interviewed and observed during their first three months of teaching. However, only two beginning teachers were observed and interviewed as the other two volunteers were posted in remote village schools where the roads were extremely bad during the heavy rainfall season (January-march) and it was impossible to get there on a regular basis.

Alice and Betty

The two teachers observed and interviewed were among the first graduates of the BETD program from Caprivi College who specialized to teach in grades 1-4. Alice, the first teacher interviewed and observed is in age group 18-23. She is married to a senior teacher and had a two year old daughter. Alice did not have any work experience before enrolling into the BETD program in 1993. She had passed her grade 10 before enrolling into the teacher program and completed her teacher program in December 1995. Before the end of their BETD program all graduating students were given application forms and a list of schools where teachers were needed. Alice got her appointment letter in December 1995, and was allocated to the school of her third choice. Betty, another teacher that was observed and interviewed is in age group 29-33. Like Alice, she is also married to a senior teacher and was allocated to the school where her husband was teaching. She has two children, a boy aged 9 and a girl aged 4. When she enrolled into the BETD program in 1993, Betty had grade 11 and some credit courses in grade 12. She did not have any work experience before she enrolled into the BETD program. In addition to being a student teacher, she was also taking correspondence courses in grade 12. She completed her grade 12 in 1994 prior to graduating in the BETD program. Betty, like Alice, completed her teacher diploma in December 1995 and was assigned to a school in the rural area where her husband was teaching.

Alice's first school

The school is located in a rural area 46 Km away from the only town in the region where most residents do their major shopping. There is no electricity or tap water. The school is from grade 1 to grade 10 with a total number of 345 pupils of which 176 are boys and 170 are girls. The school has a total number of 15 teachers of whom eight are males and seven are females. Three blocks of classrooms for grades 4-10 are built in the traditional way with thatched roofs and mud walls. Similarly, the teachers' houses are built with thatched roofs and mud walls. Neither the traditional classrooms nor the teachers' houses have doors. In contrast, one block of buildings has brick walls, a zinc roof, doors, and glass windows (see Appendix D). This contains the principal's office (shared with the secretary), one classroom for grade 1 and one for a split grade 2 and 3, which was Alice's class. The school normally starts at 7:00 am for all grades and ends at 11:30 for grades 1-3 and at 13:00 for other grades. Alice was assigned to teach a combined class of 25 grade 2 and 24 grade 3 students. She therefore had a total number of 49 pupils in her classroom. The classroom had three notice boards where the teacher's teaching aids and children work were displayed. The classroom was overcrowded with some pupils squeezed together in threes and fours in one desk. There were two storage cupboards in the corner of the classroom, a teacher's table and chair in front of the class. Alice taught at this school from January 16, 1996 to February 23, 1996 and then she was transferred to a new school which opened on February 26, 1996.

Alice's second school

The second school had 4 teachers including the principal. Alice was the only female teacher at the school. She was transferred together with her husband and their principal. She and her husband had applied to be transferred to that school. There were 120 pupils at this new school; 57 boys and 63 girls. There was one block of thatched building with 5 rooms. Four rooms served as classrooms for grades 1-4 and one was used as a staff-room and principal's office (see Appendix E). Alice was assigned to teach grade 1 with a total number of 29 pupils. Although she had a reasonable number, the classroom looked overcrowded because the room was quite small. The desks were arranged in straight rows throughout the time of observations. The classroom had no notice boards except a small chalkboard in front of the classroom and there was nothing displayed on the walls. The classrooms as well as the staff room had no doors. The school was not fenced and the livestock from nearby villages roamed through the school after school hours. The school is located in a rural area 25 km from town. Like her previous school, the school had no electricity and tap water and neither were there any shops in the area.

A typical day in Alice's class at her first school (Grades 2 and 3)

7:00 All the children and teachers at Alice's school were gathered at the assembly point in front of one block of the traditional classrooms (assemblies were normally held once per week, usually Monday morning). Bible scripture was read by one of the male

teachers and a prayer was said which was followed by a hymn sung by all the teachers and students. After the principal has reminded the learners about the importance of coming to school on time and attending regularly, the children were told to go to their classes with the lowest grade moving first and then the highest grade. At 7:20 the children were lined up outside their classrooms. Alice told the children to go inside, one row at a time. Alice and I entered when all the children were settled in their seats. All the children stood up and greeted us saying "Good morning teachers". After showing me my seat, Alice asked the children: "What is the date today class?" After the children had failed to give her the answer, she wrote the date on the chalkboard and told them what date it was. She then pasted the pictures of four people on the chalkboard. One person on the picture had one missing eye, one was missing a nose, one person was missing an ear and one was missing a mouth.

Alice: Class, what do you see on the picture?

Class: Four people.

The teacher asked the children to identify the missing parts and to give the functions of the missing parts.

Alice: What part is missing in person number one?

All children raised up their hands. The teacher pointed to Mwale.

Mwale: Eye

Alice: Good

The teacher asked the children how many eyes each person should have. In unison they said two.

Alice: What part is missing in person number two?

Mabuku: Nose.

Alice: Good, and what is the function of the nose?

Mundia: Smelling.

Alice: Who can tell me the part that is missing in person number three?

Manga: Ear.

Teacher wrote 'eye', nose, and 'ear' on the chalkboard. She then asked the children how many ears a person should have as well as the function of the ears.

Alice: What part of the body is missing in person number four?

Mushabati: Mouth.

The teacher wrote the word (mouth in Lozi) on the chalkboard and asked children to name other parts that they could see on the picture. The parts were added to the list on the chalkboard. The teacher asked the children what the parts were called in English. The children only knew a few words and the teacher helped them to name the rest in English. The teacher wrote them in English beside the corresponding Lozi name. When the list was complete, the teacher asked the children to stand up and to read after her. Each word was read twice in Lozi and in English. After repeating a couple of times, the children were asked to read together with the teacher, and then they were asked to read the list alone. This was repeated three times. At 7:45 the

teacher summoned the children to sit down and sing a song while she stepped outside to get pencils from the next door classroom. She came back with the pencils which she distributed to the grade 3s. She then gave exercise books to both the grade 2s and 3s. The teacher instructed the grade 3s to copy the list of the parts of the body in English and Lozi. Meanwhile the grade 2s were also saying that they wanted to write. The teacher explained to them that there were not enough pencils because she had only five left after giving them to the grade 3 students. She told them that they will write when the grade 3s finish writing. One child told the teacher that his pencil was not sharpened. Another one also pointed out that his was not sharpened either. The teacher sharpened their pencils and told them to write quickly. She walked from desk to desk checking the children's work. Meanwhile the grade 2s were not doing anything. From time to time the teacher ordered the grade 2s to keep quiet. Many of the grade 2s were asking permission to go out. She allowed one child at a time to go to the 'washroom'. There were frequent reports from grade 2s about other children troubling them by pinching them. The teacher reprimanded the trouble makers. At 8:15 the teacher collected the pencils from grade 3s and handed them to grade 2s.

When grade 2s had finished writing, they were instructed to stand up and recite a poem while the teacher went and collected textbooks from the cupboard. The teacher handed the textbooks to the grade 3 learners, but there were not enough for the whole class. After giving out the textbooks the teacher instructed the children to stand up and sign a religious song.

Alice: Sit down and turn to page 7.

While the grade 3 learners were turning pages, some of the grade 2 learners were anxious to see what was on page 7. The teacher held her book towards the grade 2s so that they could see the picture.

Alice: What do you see in this picture?

All the children raised up their hands while saying: "me teacher, me teacher." They seemed very eager to give the answer. The children were able to describe what they were seeing on the picture. Next the teacher asked the learners if they could describe what was going on in the picture.

Alice: Who can tell us what is happening in this picture?

When nobody volunteered, the teacher wrote on the chalkboard: 'Nuwe ni Aleka' (Noah and the Ark). She told them the story without reading from the book. children were very attentive when the teacher was telling the story. She paused every now and then asking the children to guess what was going to happen next or tell the story from where she stopped. Nobody was able to predict or volunteer to continue with the story. The teacher therefore continued telling the story up to the end.

Alice: That is the end of the story. Now I want those who have the books to read the story with me. They read the story with the teacher.

After reading the story twice, the teacher asked children questions based on the story such as: Who told Noah to built the ark?, Who was in the ark; how long did it rain? After answering the questions the teacher asked the children to sing the song

about 'Noah'. 9:30 The bell rings and the teacher tells the children to go for break time Alice went to her house to have breakfast.

10:00 Children were back in their classes, and greeted the teacher when she entered. The teacher wrote 'Maths' on the chalkboard and wrote four sums. She worked the answers with the children on the chalkboard. She then collected pencils from the grade 2s and gave them to the grade 3s and asked them to work out the following sums: $6+1$; $5+3$; $7+2$; $3+2$ and $9+1$.

Alice waled around checking the children's work and helping them. She gave ten pieces of chalks to other children who were having difficulty to aid them in working out the answers. Like with the previous lesson, the grade 2s had to wait for the pencils and there was a lot of 'excuse me teacher so and so is troubling me' and 'excuse me teacher may I go out?' At 10:20, Alice collected pencils from the grade 3s and gave them to the grade 2s to write the Maths class work. The teacher wrote different sums for the grade 2s: $2+2$; $1+4$; $3+2$; $2+1$; $1+1$. When the grade 2s were doing their class work, the teacher marked some of the grade 3 work while at the same time helping some of the grade 2s who were having problems in doing their work.

10:40 The teacher instructed the children to stand up and recite the recitation 'Simbotwe'. While the children were reciting, the teacher cleaned the chalkboard and wrote 'Lozi'.

Alice: Who can come and write 'Bome' (mother) on the chalkboard?

Only a few of the grade 3s raised up their hands (none of the grade 2s raised a hand), the teacher called Sinte. Shyly she took the chalk from the teacher and correctly wrote the word 'bome'. Teacher instructed other children to clap hands for Sinte.

Alice: Who will write 'Mate' on the chalkboard? *Again only a few grade 3s raised up their hands. The teacher handed a chalk to one child, who wrote the word correctly.*

Alice: Good! Clap hands for Kamwi. *Children clapped hands and saying; cheer... cheer ... cheer ...*

Alice: Who can come and write 'Sibiti'? *No hand raised. Teacher gave the children a clue by writing the first letter of the word and asked the children if there is one who was prepared to try. Again nobody volunteered. The teacher invited one of the grade 2s to try. After much encouragement and persuading, the child shyly accepted and wrote 'sibti'.*

Alice: Good, this is a very good attempt. Let us clap hands for Kahimbi. *Children clapped hands and Kahimbi smilingly went back to her seat.*

Alice: There is one vowel missing in the word. Who can come and put the missing vowel?

Alice pointed to a grade 3 child who raised up her hand and correctly inserted the missing vowel in the right place. The lesson continued in the same pattern. The list of the words were neatly rewritten by the teacher. Alice instructed the grade 2s to

copy down the words and pass the pencils to the grade 3s once they are done. Alice asked on grade 2 child to collect the Mathematics exercise books and put them on the table.

11:26 Alice marked the attendance register. Eight children were absent, five of the absentees were grade 2s while three were grade 3s.

At 11:30 the bell rang, and the teacher instructed the children to stand up and say a prayer. After the prayer the children said good-bye and went home. Alice and I remained behind half an hour for interviews. After the interview, Alice told me she was coming back to her classroom in the evening to mark the children's work and do the lesson planning for the following day.

The above lessons represent the commonly used teaching strategies in Alice's class during the time of observations. Although the learners were actively involved in answering questions, writing on the chalkboard, and doing class work, the lesson was mainly through question and answer method. Some components of a learner centered approach such as learner to learner interactions, collaborative learning, and active involvement were not incorporated in the lesson. Most of the teaching was through repetition which encouraged memorization.

Betty's School

The school where Betty teaches is 68 Km away from Katima Mulilo (the only town in the region) where teachers do their major shopping. There is no electricity

nor tap water. The school is from grade 1 to grade 10 and has a total number of 306 students of which 167 are boys and 139 are girls. There are 13 teachers of which 7 are males and 6 females. There are four blocks of classrooms at this school. Two blocks are made of brick walls and zinc roofs, while two blocks have zinc walls and roofs. Betty was assigned to teach grade 3 with a total number of 34 pupils in her class. Her classroom has zinc walls and roof (see Appendix F). The classroom has enough space to organize group work but not big enough to set up learning centers. The desks were arranged in groups of fours and fives throughout the time of observations. There is one teacher's table and chair in front of the classroom. There are no cupboards in which to store her materials. All the space she had for storing her things are two drawers in her table. Her table is overcrowded because she not put everything in the drawers. There was nothing displayed on the walls as there were no notice boards and walls are corrugated iron and no push pins can go through. Another disadvantage of her classroom is that when the weather gets warmer the classroom also get uncomfortably hot and when it is raining, it is very noisy.

A typical day in Betty's class (grade 3)

At 6:58 the school bell rang. Children were running in different directions to their classrooms. Learners were standing in two rows in front of Betty's classroom. They were stranding according to height (i.e. short pupils in front and tall ones at the back). After briefly inspecting them to see if some were dirty or did not comb their hair, Betty

summoned them to enter. I was invited to enter after all the pupils were seated. When Betty and I entered, all the learners stood up and greeted us, saying "Good morning teachers."

At 7:00 Betty asked the pupils to say a prayer which they chanted.

Betty: Let us count up to 20.

Pupils counted in unison while jumping and clapping their hands.

Betty: Again.

Pupils repeated the counting.

Betty: Thank you. You may sit down.

Pupils: We are sitting down.

Teacher wrote the following on the chalkboard: Subject: English: Topic: parts of the body. She also pasted a chart on the chalkboard.

Betty: Stand up class.

Pupils: We are standing up.

Betty: Let us sing our song 'toho'.

Pupils sang together with the teacher while touching each part of the body they mentioned in the song. Betty summoned the children to sit down after repeating the song twice. Betty point to the chart on the chalkboard asked, "What do you see in this picture?"

Children raised up their hands. Betty pointed to one child.

Nanvula: Head.

Betty: Yes, there is a head. Who can tell me about the whole picture?

Muyunda: Boy.

Betty: Very good.

The teacher repeated the answer four times. "It is a boy. It is a boy. It is a boy. It is a picture of a boy."

Betty: Now I want you to tell me the parts of the body on the picture.

The teacher repeated the question in Lozi and urged the children to tell the parts in English. The same question was again repeated in English. children raised up hands and the teacher pointed to one child.

Sitwala: Head.

Betty: Yes, there is a head.

Betty: Who can show us the head on the picture?

Children raised their hands up. The same child was asked to go and show the head.

Sitwala: This is a head. Pointed to the head on the picture.

Betty asked the class to repeat what Sitwala had said.

Class: "That is a head" Point to the picture.

Betty: Clap hands for Sitwala.

Children clapped hands to Sitwala for giving the correct answer.

Alice: Who can show us another part of the body on the picture?

Everybody's hand was up. Everyone seemed eager to give the answer.

Betty: Okay, lets see. Namata.

Namata: Eyes.

Betty: Good. Come and show us the eyes.

Pupil went and pointed to the eyes on the picture.

Betty: Good. Now show me your eyes everybody.

The children pointed to their eyes saying in unison, "this is my eyes." Betty did not attempt to correct the children to use 'these' instead of 'this'.

Betty: Show me your heads.

Pupils: This is my head.

Betty: Any other part you see on the picture?

The teacher pointed to the boy who did not raise up his hand.

Betty: Yes, Mendai.

The child did not answer. There was some silence for some few moments. All other children were looking at Mendai.

Betty: Try Mendai, just try.

The other two children sitting next to Mendai were poking him with their elbows encouraging him to say something. But Mendai just kept quiet.

Betty: Okay, Sikopo. Can you give us another part of the body not yet mentioned.

Sikopo: Ears.

Betty: Very good.

Betty asked Mendai to go and point the ears on the picture. After the child has pointed the ears on the picture the teacher asked all children to show her their ears.

Pupils: This is my ears. The answer was repeated twice. Again no attempt was made to correct the children.

Betty: Any other part you see there on the picture? Yes, Mwanga?

Mwanga: Nose.

Betty: Mwanga, come and show us the nose on the picture.

Mwanga pointed to the nose on the picture and said: "This is my noise"

Betty corrected the child - "This is my nose." (Betty pointed to her own nose) and this is a nose (Betty pointed to the nose on the picture).

Betty: Can you tell others again. What is this?

Mwanga: This is a nose.

Betty: Everybody.

Class: This is a nose.

Betty corrected the children by telling them that because they are far they should say 'that is a nose' and when they are nearby they can say: 'this is the nose'. The explanation was given in Lozi.

Betty: Class what is this? (teacher pointed to the nose on the picture).

Class: That is a nose.

The answer was repeated three times.

Betty: Who can show us another part of the body in the picture?

Betty pointed to one of the three children who did not raise up their hands. The child kept quietly, but Betty urged him to say something. After starting at the picture for some time he said: Mouth.

Betty: Good, Very good. Teacher repeated the answer twice and then asked Muyuza to go and show the class the 'mouth' on the picture. She reminded the child in Lozi what to say when near and when far.

Muyuza: This is the mouth. *(Pointing to the mouth on the picture).*

Betty: Good. Can you also show me your mouth?

Muyuza: This is my mouth.

Betty: Are there other parts of the body that you can still see on the picture which are not yet mentioned?

Class: Yes.

Betty: Namasiku can you show us another part of the body on the picture?

Namasiku: This is the finger *(pointed to the fingers on the picture).*

Betty: Good. Class show me your fingers.

Class: This is my Fingers.

Betty asked the children if their fingers were not with them "If your fingers are with you say: These are my fingers." (Betty sounded a little bit annoyed and impatient).

Class: These are my fingers. *The answer was repeated three times.*

Betty: How many fingers do we have on one hand?

Class: Five *(they shouted the answer in unison).*

Betty: And how many fingers do we have altogether? *(instruction was repeated in Lozi).*

Class: Ten fingers.

Betty: Very good. *(teacher explained in Lozi that if more than one finger we add 's' at the end).*

The lesson continued in the same pattern with the teacher asking children to name the parts of the body. The lesson ended as it was introduced with the song about the body parts: 'head, shoulder, knees and toes'. Betty and the children seemed to enjoy this part.

AT 7:40 Betty removed the picture from the chalkboard and cleaned the chalkboard and wrote 'Writing'. She told the children that the English Lesson was over and they were now in 'Writing'. Lozi was now the medium of instruction. Betty took the children's exercise books from the drawer and distributed them. She asked one child to help her in distributing the pencils.

Betty: I have marked your homework on alphabets. Today we are going to learn how to write the Alphabets in small letters. Who knows the first letter of alphabets?

All raised up their hands and the teacher called upon Kahimbi to give the answer.

Kahimbi: 'A'.

Betty: Good. Everybody.

Class: 'A'.

8:33 Two children were standing at the door asking permission to come in. Betty inquired why they were late. They just kept quiet. After asking them three times without getting an answer, Betty summoned them to come inside but warned them to try to be on time in future. She explained to the two children what was going on and handed them their exercise books. The lesson continued.

Betty: Who knows how to write the alphabet 'A' in small letter?

No hands up. The teacher gave them a clue by telling them that it is written in the same way like the vowel 'a'. Half of the class raised up their hands.

Betty: Namasiku come and write it for us.

Namasiku shyly stood up and wrote the Small letter 'a' on the chalkboard.

Betty: Very good Namasiku. Class this is how we write a small letter 'a'. class give a big hand to Namasiku she got it right.

Betty instructed the children to stand up and recite the alphabets from 'A' to 'Z'. They were told to sit down after they have repeated reciting them three times.

Betty: Who can write a small letter of the alphabet 'B'? Simasiku, can you try?

Simasiku took the chalk from the teacher and wrote 'd' instead of 'b' on the chalkboard.

Betty: Good trial Simasiku. Who knows this letter Simasiku has written?

There was no response. Betty told the class that Simasiku has written a small 'd'. She explained to them that it looks more like a small 'b'. She showed them how the small 'b' is written.

Betty hung the chart of the alphabets on the chalkboard which consisted of both the upper and lower case of the alphabets. She pointed to each alphabet and showed them how it is written in a small letter. The teacher then continued asking the children to come and write the letters on the chalkboard while looking at the examples from the chart. When all the alphabets were attempted, children were instructed to copy the lower case of the alphabets in their exercise books. Betty walked around checking and modeled to the children how to write certain letters.

At 9:30 The school bell rang and the teacher told the children it was break time. The children shouted "Break time! break time!" and ran outside.

10:00 The bell rang and the children ran to their classrooms.

When Betty and I entered the classroom the ritual of standing up and greeting was repeated.

Betty: Those of you who did not finish copying the alphabets you can finish up.

The children continued copying the alphabets from the chart while the teacher was walking around checking the children's work and helping those who were having problems.

10:15 Betty collected the children's exercise books and wrote 'Lozi' on the chalkboard.

Betty: *Stand up class and let us recite our recitation 'Njoko' (monkey).*

The children happily recited the recitation with gestures and actions imitating the monkey. This was repeated three times. Betty then asked for a volunteer to recite the recitation Half of the class volunteered. Betty called one child who came in front and recited the recitation quite well. The second child was called to come in front and recite. Hesitantly, he went in front and with a very low voice he recited while fidgeting with his hands and taking long pauses every now and then. Each child was given a chance to recite. At the end they were all asked to recite the recitation.

11:00 Betty wrote the topic: 'Seasons of the year' on the chalkboard.

Betty: *How many seasons do we have in a year?*

Few children raised up their hands and Betty called Monde to give the answer.

Monde: *There are four seasons in a year.*

Betty: *Yes, there are four seasons in a year.*

Betty: *Who can give me the name of one of the seasons?*

All children raised up their hands. Betty pointed Muyunda to give the answer.

Muyunda: *'Maliha' (Winter).*

Betty: *Very good. Betty wrote the word 'maliha' on the chalkboard and asked the children to read it while the teacher pointed to the word.*

Betty asked the children to discuss in groups what was significant about the winter season .. After 10 minutes Betty asked each group what they knew about winter.

Group 1: It is cold during winter.

Group 2: People like basking in the sun in the morning and in the evening.

Group 3: People like sitting around the fire at night.

Group 4: People wear their warm sweaters.

Betty wrote all the responses on the chalkboard

Betty: Good. Now who can give us another season?

Simataa: 'Mbumbi' (Summer).

Betty wrote it on the chalkboard and asked for the other two remaining seasons.

Mwale: 'Munda' (Autumn).

Betty: Good. *(Betty wrote it on the chalkboard).*

Betty: Who can give us the last one? Yes Mendai.

Mendai: Litabula.

Betty: Good. *Teacher repeated the answer and wrote it on the chalkboard.*

Betty asked the children to read the four seasons with her. This was repeated three times. The teacher invited individuals to read alone. "Who can read alone?"

Some were able to read all words alone while some were able to read with the help of the teacher. After each child has had a turn to read, then Betty instructed the children to copy the four seasons of the year.

11:25 Betty marked the attendance register and inquired from the students about other learners who were absent. The learners were not at all helpful in providing the needed information.

11:30 The children were instructed to stand up and say a prayer. The children said good-bye to their teacher and went home.

As in the case of Alice, Betty also heavily relied on the question and answer method to involve learners and to find out what the learners knew about the topic. Most of the questions asked needed a one word answer. The only difference is that at times Betty allowed her students to interact through group discussions. However, this was not frequent during the time of observations.

Findings

The data from both questionnaires and interviews were analyzed by taking into account the four research questions the study was attempting to answer:

1. Would the first graduates of the BETD program be able to successfully implement a learner centered approach?
2. Would they be well prepared and confident enough to introduce it in their classrooms?
3. Would they be influenced to use teacher directed methods?
4. Would they encounter problems in using a learner centered approach?

Answers to the first two questions were obtained from the following items: Item 7 (See Appendix A) which required the respondents to give their own explanation of the term 'learner centered approach'; Items 8 and 9 (See Appendix A) in which the respondents were to give the role of the teacher and that of the student in a learner centered classroom; item 10 (See Appendix A) in which the respondents were to list the advantages of a learner centered approach; items 12 and 13 (See Appendix A) which required the respondents to indicate the teaching approach and seating arrangement used by college lecturers; item 13 (See Appendix B) which required the respondents to list ideas that they acquired in their teacher program which were most helpful since they started teaching; item 15 (See Appendix A) which required the respondents to indicate the areas they felt confident in; item 17 (See Appendix A) which aimed at finding out the respondents' philosophy about the teaching and learning of young children in the learner centered approach; item 23 (See Appendix A) and item 10 (See Appendix B) required the respondents to indicate the teaching approach they used during their school based studies (practicum) and the approach they were using in their classroom during their first three months as beginning teachers.

The following views or perceptions, understandings, and experiences were gleaned from the above items:

1. The role of a learner in a learner centered approach

Active participant

Item 11 of Questionnaire #1 required the respondents to list the advantages of a learner centered approach. One of the advantages mentioned by the respondents is that in a learner centered approach, learners are not passive recipients of information. "The advantage of learner centered approach is that pupils are more actively involved in a lesson." The respondents contended that the students actively participate in a lesson if learner centered methods are used. Five of the seven respondents viewed a learner centered approach as an approach in which a teacher involves the learners in a lesson. Similarly, in their response to item 9 (See Appendix A) in which they were to list the role of the learner in the learner centered approach, three believed that the role of the learner is to be actively involved in the lesson. For example one respondent stated that "Students should be more involved than the teacher." In response to the same question, another respondent pointed out that "students need to participate in the lesson, this helps the teacher to evaluate her lesson and diagnose weaknesses of learners and the teacher." They believe that in this approach, learner participation is very high, even higher than that of the teacher. For example, one of the respondents in his explanation of the term 'learner centered approach' stated that "... is the process whereby learners are 80 - 100% involved in the lesson". The students are expected to be very active participants in the lesson. "Students should be more involved than the teacher, should contribute more to a lesson by dominating

the discussion more than the teacher." This view of the role of the learner as active participant in the learning and teaching situation is consistent with how the learner is perceived in the Broad Curriculum for Basic Education: "A learner-centered approach demands a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production" (p.3). The role of the students in a learner centered approach is to make some contributions during group work and class discussions. The Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia pointed out that the learning situation in a democratic learner centered education should be perceived as "an interactive process" (1993:44). In a similar vein, Kindervatter, 1977 maintains that one of the common characteristics of learner centered approaches is to "catalyze active participation and interaction of learners rather than passive information gathering (p.3)." In contrast to the teacher centered approach where the teacher is expected to talk more and the students' task is just to listen, in a learner centered approach the students, not the teacher should dominate in the teaching and learning situation. Students should not passively receive information from the teacher but should be allowed to contribute to the lesson. In this situation, both the teacher and students simultaneously share the role of being teachers and learners. This implies that the teacher should use teaching strategies which encourage active participation on the part of the students. Several of the BETD students articulated an understanding of this concept, although from the classroom observations of the two beginning teachers, learners were mostly involved by answering questions which required a one word answer.

Learners as Collaborators

In a learner centered approach the learners are given a chance to talk to each other and share whatever knowledge they have. They are encouraged to work together and learn from each other. Five of the seven respondents concur that one of the advantages of a learner centered approach is that students are allowed to share ideas. "Learners gave time to share ideas." Every student is expected to co-operate and share what they know with other learners. In this situation learners are also teachers. Students are not just expected to learn from the teacher but also to learn from each other through class discussions, group work and pair work. Learners have to share ideas and solve problems with the guidance of the teacher. In this approach it is expected that interaction is not a one way process (teacher to students) but a two way process (between student and student and teacher and students). Similarly, the administrator and teacher educators in Nyambe's study (1996) explained the term learner-centeredness and democratic pedagogy in terms of student involvement and participation as can be detected in the following statements:

I think democratic pedagogy refers to things such as communication, that is where you allow students to get involved in the teaching learning process. It means a strong communication between students and teacher educators. Basically this refers to dialogue. Teaching-learning is not a one-man show. The teacher education, as we do here at the college, should decentralize his or her teaching, so to speak. That is very important to allow students to get the opportunity to give their comments and suggestions on the problem or solution. They should also be given opportunity in decision making when it comes to the subject (Nyambe, 1996:98).

Another participant in Nyambe's study explained the two terms (learner centeredness and democratic education) in this way:

Here we are talking of interactive and shared learning. Many educationists have found this to be true that a learner comes into class not only as a mere vessel but he or she has got something to share. So there must be that interaction between the teacher and the learners. The teacher can learn from the learner as much as the learner learns from the teacher. So it becomes a shared responsibility. The teacher is not the one who knows everything: But the teacher also has got to learn something from the learners (Nyambe, 1996:99)

The respondents in this study appear to have a developing understanding of the role of the learner in the new Namibian education system; although most of the respondents stated that children should be given a chance to interact and learn from each other, the teaching strategies that were commonly used by the two teachers did not support their espoused views. The two teachers, through the question and answer method, were mostly promoting teacher to learner interactions.

Independent learners/Empowerment

Another advantage of a learner centered approach mentioned by five respondents is that the teacher is not there to feed the students with information or solve all the problems in a lesson. Students are empowered to be independent thinkers. They are given time to discuss and solve problems on their own without the help of the teacher. For example, one respondent pointed out that one of the advantages of using learner centered teaching strategies is that "it allows learners to

solve problems on their own." Some of the respondents see a learner centered approach as a teaching approach that encourages learners to investigate things on their own. Children learn to independent thinkers and problem solvers. As another respondent put it: "Learner Centered Approach is where learners are given a lot of time to discover things on their own." The respondents' perception of a learner centered approach as an approach which promotes independent and critical learners who are problem solvers is consistent with the aim of the new education system in Namibia, as can be discerned from the following statement:

Currently, teaching methods in our schools tend to foster memorization and rote repetition. But to address the problems we face and to lay the foundation for a self-reliant and prosperous Namibia we need our young people to go beyond relaying on what they have read or been told. Indeed, learning is more than memorizing and repeating. Our children need to learn to think independently and critically (Towards Education for All, MEC.1993:119).

Although the description of the advantages of a learner centered approach are congruent with the views of the Ministry of Education and Culture, an important issue is whether or not the participant are equipped with the necessary skills to produce or help students become independent and critical learners, as this goes hand in hand with the teaching strategies and the type of questioning the teacher uses. From the observations in the two classrooms, most of the lessons relied on repetition and recall of the topic. Most of the questions asked were therefore one answer questions which

required the learner either to name, recite or label. Answers were also limited to one word or short phrases at most.

It is also interesting to mention that only one of the respondents pointed out that he/she still needed some more experience in the area of questioning skill when they were asked to indicate some areas in which they still needed some more experience. Questioning skill is a very important strategy in creating problem solvers and critical thinkers and it requires the teacher to be aware of the different categories of questions and the purpose of the level of each question. If, for example, the purpose of the question is to promote thinking skill, an appropriate question should be asked which would yield the required results. For example Dantonio (1990) pointed out that:

Facilitating learners' thinking skills through interactive lessons requires that teachers use processing questions which help learners think through their original responses so that learners understand the thinking behind what they have said (metacognition). These questions are designed to refine learner responses by assisting them in clarifying, extending, personalizing, and/or supporting their thinking (p.23).

Dantonio (1990) cautions that, although some are gifted with the questioning skill, many teachers have to struggle to develop their questioning skill. He further emphasized the importance of this skill as he reasoned that "...the more we know about the nature and function of questions, and the more opportunities we have to practice sound questioning techniques, the more effective we will become at asking questions" (p.14).

If teachers continue to spoon feed their learners and only questions that require recall of specific facts from a lesson, they are not empowering the learners to think for themselves. Teachers should be aware that this does not favor or promote the aim of a learner centered approach to produce problem solvers and independent critical thinkers.

2. The role of the teacher in a learner centered approach

Teacher as Facilitator

The role of the teacher in a learner centered approach is perceived as that of facilitator. At the time of graduation, the majority of the respondents, five out of seven respondents pointed out that the role of the teacher is to act as a facilitator in the teaching and learning situation. One of the seven respondents to the first questionnaire (see Appendix A) asserted that "the role of the teacher in a learner centered approach is to serve as a facilitator." Another respondent pointed out that "As a teacher I need to be a facilitator in the lesson, for example, I write a topic on the board and give time to the learners to reflect on the topic given." Similarly, Rowell (1995) contends that in learner centered education, "the role of the teacher becomes that of mediator of learning experiences in which the learners generate meaning rather than one of transmitter of knowledge" (p.7). In addition both of the two teachers interviewed pointed out that the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning situation is to act as a facilitator. When probed further to explain what it really means to be a

'facilitator', Alice had this to say "What it means is that teacher should make sure that children are provided with what they need for learning to take place and encouraging them" (Jan. 31, 1996). Likewise, when Betty was asked to elaborate on the role of the teacher as a 'facilitator', she eloquently pointed out that "a teacher as a facilitator implies that a teacher provides the right kind of environment for the learning to take place" (Feb. 14, 1996). Although Alice and Betty were able to explain the term 'facilitator' in terms of providing the right kind of learning environment, their classroom environments were not organized to achieve this. In addition, their teaching strategies were very structured.

Teacher as Manager

Teachers are perceived as managers in the teaching and learning situation. Two of the respondents asserted that role of the teacher is act as a manager in a learner centered classroom. "Teachers should be monitors and managers in the classroom." The participants' views of the role of the teacher corresponds with the description of tasks of the teacher as set out by the Ministry of Education and Culture (1995):

a teacher is a classroom manager. His or her role is to ensure that conditions for learning and teaching exists in his or her classroom. Every teacher must be fully aware of the requirements of the curriculum and syllabuses. He or she should develop a weekly scheme of work showing what part of the syllabus will covered during the week and what teaching aid will be required. He or she should develop a daily lesson plan showing clearly the

expected learning outcome at the end of the lesson (lesson objectives): learning activities to be carried out; assessment procedures, etc. Every teacher is required to conduct a roll call either at the beginning of a lesson in case of subject teacher. Learners missing classes without permission must be reported to the school principal. Cases of indiscipline should also be reported to the principal who may wish to refer them to the school Disciplinary Committee hearing (MEC Directive No:001/016/095,2.12).

From the above quotation the teacher is perceived as a manager in terms of some of the tasks that he/she is required to do apart from the actual teaching. In addition to the actual teaching, Alice and Betty had to mark attendance registers, mark students' work, draw a scheme of work, and do daily preparation lessons.

Teacher as Guide

Two participants pointed out that the role of the teacher in a learner centered approach is to guide the learners in a classroom situation. "The role of the teacher is to guide learners where possible." Another respondent also asserted that "the role of the teacher is to give guidance and to control the learners and even to help them." When Alice was asked to elaborate on what was meant by 'teacher as a guide' she explained it as follows: "A teacher has a model to the children by showing them how to write or by directing them how to do certain activities through questioning them." Similarly, Betty also explained the term 'guide' in terms of the teacher helping the learners for example by providing clues to the answers when they are stuck with a

question. Both Alice and Betty partly fulfilled the term 'teacher as a guide' by probing and giving clues to answers. They did not see it in terms of guiding the children by providing stimulating and challenging learning materials.

The view of the teacher as a 'guide' is sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'facilitator', for example, the NAEYC suggested that 'teachers of young children are more like guides or facilitators' (Bredekamp, 1987:52). They caution that in teaching young children, teachers should avoid using traditional teaching methods such as lecturing or using oral instruction throughout the lesson but should "prepare the environment so that it provides stimulating, challenging materials and activities for children. Then, teachers closely observe to see what children understand and pose additional challenges to push their thinking further" (p.52). Farrant (1980) also pointed out that the role of the teacher shifts "from that in which he/she is the main authority and source of all knowledge to one in which he acts simply as a guide to the pupil to enable him to make use of other sources of useful information" (p.46).

3. Philosophy about teaching and learning

Children's prior knowledge

In response to item 17 (see Appendix A) which required the respondents to state their philosophy about the teaching and learning of young children, four felt that the teacher should begin from where the child is. For example, one respondent stated that "they (children) should be taught from known to unknown and teachers should use

concrete materials before they use the abstract ones." Another respondent stated that "teachers should know the level of the learner and teach from known to unknown, from simple to complex." Similarly, Alice pointed out that one of the advantages of a learner centered approach is that the teacher always takes into account the experiences of the children.

Another advantage of the learner centered approach is that the teacher will always find out from the children what they know about the topic instead of giving them all the information. A teacher can therefore learn from what the children already know about the topic. Sometimes there are many things children know that a teacher doesn't know about a topic. Children will therefore have rich information about the topic as each one of them share his or her experiences instead of just getting information from one person. (Jan. 30, 1996)

This view of the learner is also emphasized in the Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (1992) as can be discerned in the following statement: "Learner-centered education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner, valuing the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies." This also corresponds with the beliefs of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1987) who contend that "for children to fully understand and remember what they have learned, whether it is related to reading, mathematics, or other subject areas, the information must be meaningful to the child in the context of the child's experience and development" (p.52).

This corresponds with earlier work of Osborne (1977) in which he stated that:

When each flower, each tree, each blade of grass are present and accounted for, the natural environment is in harmonious balance. The same is true for the classroom. Each member of the class has a place and contributes to the whole. The teacher recognizes the importance of each contributor to this social environment. Each child is seen as a creative individual who brings to the classroom his own unique experiences (p.51).

This shows that the participants' beliefs about how young children should be taught and how they learn is in line with rationale of the new education system in Namibia as well as how it is viewed by the NAEYC. The philosophy which puts emphasis on the learner's experience as stepping ladder in the teaching and learning situation could be said to acknowledge the fact that learners are not empty vessels but bring something to school which they can share with other fellow learners as well as the teacher. The teacher should therefore capitalize on this experience to expand on the topic under discussion or clarify any misconceptions children might have.

Use of concrete objects

Four out of the seven respondents to item 17 (see Appendix A) believe that teachers of young children should make use of real objects or improvise if possible in teaching young children. As one respondent puts it "Teachers of young children should use concrete teaching aids", while another respondent pointed out that "...young children learn by doing, so everything they learn should involve doing, this is using

their own hands. Teachers should use concrete materials in teaching young children".

The respondents believed that in order to help learners to remember what they have learnt and also for learning to be meaningful, children should be given a chance to see, touch, and hear for themselves if the situation permits. Both the two teachers interviewed strongly believed that children understand and learn better when they see what they are learning. For example Alice had this to say:

I believe that children should be taught by providing an opportunity for them to interact with the real objects if possible. In this way they will have first hand knowledge about what they are learning and it is easier for them to understand and remember what they have seen, touched or smelled. Teachers should try to provide such opportunities for children. They should use all their senses if possible. Yesterday for example when I was teaching them about 'cleaning their teeth', I had to bring a tooth paste, tooth brush, water, and a special root of a plant that is locally used as a tooth brush for them to see. I had to demonstrate to them how they can clean their teeth by using toothpaste and a toothbrush as I was aware that some of them have never used them. One child demonstrated how we can clean our teeth by using the root of the plant. If we were just going to talk about it, was going to be difficult for me to explain and also difficult for them to understand (Mar. 13, 1996).

Like Alice, Betty also believed that children can remember easily when teachers make use of concrete objects in teaching them as can be discerned from her comment:

I think children learn best when they use all their senses in learning. If possible children should not just hear what they are learning but should be provided with the opportunities to see and touch for themselves. In this way a teacher will be providing them with first hand

information that could be easily remembered. Just talking about the things they are required to learn is not enough. A teacher should make use of concrete things to help the children make sense of what they are learning. For example in Mathematics when they are learning about addition and subtraction, I allow them to use concrete objects to aid them in working out the answers (Mar. 18, 1996).

It was observed that both the two teachers sometimes used concrete objects especially in teaching mathematics. While Alice used chalks, Betty used stones in helping the children to work out the answers.

The participants' belief about how children learn and how they should be taught is congruent with the views of National Association for the Education of Young Children who pointed out that one of the teaching strategies in the primary grades is for teachers to prepare the environment in such away that "Learning materials and activities are concrete, real, and relevant to children's lives. Objects children can manipulate and experiment with such as blocks, cards, games, woodworking tools, arts and crafts materials including paint and clay, and scientific equipment are readily accessible" (Bredekamp, 1987:69).

4. Influences on beginning teachers

In seeking answers to the research question: Would the beginning teachers be influenced to use the teacher directed methods? The respondents were asked to indicate the teaching approach which was commonly used by their lecturers (12) (see

Appendix A), to indicate the seating arrangement which was commonly used in the college classrooms, (13) (see Appendix A) to indicate the teaching approach which they used in their school based studies (18) (See Appendix A) and how they organized their classrooms during their school based studies (19) (See Appendix A). Item 21 (See Appendix A). Item 21 (See Appendix A) asked respondents to select the teaching approach that was commonly used by other teachers at the schools where they did their school based studies, and item 10 (see Appendix B) asked the respondents were to indicate the teaching approach which was commonly used at the schools they were teaching in as beginning teachers.

The following answers were obtained form the above items which aimed at answering the question: Would the first graduates of the BETD program be influenced to use teacher directed methods? In response to item 12 (see Appendix A), all the seven respondents who returned the first questionnaire indicated that their lecturers (instructors) used a learner cantered approach. However, there were some contradictions in the respondents' responses to item 13 (See Appendix A) in which they were asked to indicate the common seating arrangement used by their college lecturers (instructors). For example, two of the seven respondents indicated that their college lecturers arranged their seats in circles, two stated that these were semi-circles, and one mentioned that their college instructors used circles and semi-circles. Another respondent stated that college lecturers (instructor) used the following three sitting arrangements: straight rows, circles and semi-circle, while another respondent

indicated that they used two sitting arrangements: semi-circle and groups. It is interesting to note that a group of people who have sat in the same classes and been taught by the same instructors have contradictory answers on the same item.

In response to item 18 (See Appendix A) in which the respondents were to indicate the teaching approach they commonly used during their practicum or school based studies, all seven respondents who returned the first questionnaire indicated that they used a learner centered approach. In item 19 (See Appendix A) the respondents were to indicate how their classrooms were organized. The majority of the respondents (five out of seven) stated that they arranged the seats in groups. One indicated that she organized her classroom in straight rows. four respondents stated that teachers at the school where they did their school based studies (practicum) used a teacher centered approach while three indicated that teachers where they did their school based studies (practicum) used a learner centered approach. In the second questionnaire when respondents were asked to indicate the teaching approach which was commonly used by other teachers at their schools, five out of ten stated that the commonly used teaching approach at their school was a learner centered approach. Three out of the ten respondents indicated that teachers at their schools used both teacher centered and learner centered approaches, while two indicated that the commonly used teaching approach at their schools was a teacher centered approach.

5. Disadvantages of a learner centered approach

In item 11 (see Appendix A) the respondents were asked to list the disadvantages of a learner centered approach. The following disadvantages were listed by the respondents at the time of graduation:

Slow learners are not able to participate; shy learners do not participate in group work; in case of younger ones they are difficult to control; it may mean that not all learners are working at the same time; discipline may be difficult; this approach involves more planning and preparation; it is difficult to monitor pupil's progress; it is more demanding on learners; it contributes to the noise in the classroom and gives a tough time to the teacher to calm the situation.

The following were mentioned by more than one respondents: Time consuming, noise; not inclusive, and discipline. four of the seven respondents commented that a learner centered approach requires a lot of time on the part of the teacher to prepare. "This approach involves more planning and preparations", while another respondent also argued that a learner centered approach "... is too demanding on the part of the teacher and also demanding on the part of the students who are expected to work all the time." At the time of graduation, six of the seven respondents indicated that a common disadvantage of a learner centered approach is 'noise'. Some of this will be discussed in detail under the heading 'Perceived problems of learner centered approach' as most of them were listed by participants as problems experienced during school based studies and during their first three months as beginning teachers.

6. Perceived problems of learner centered approach

To address the research question: Would the beginning teachers encounter problems in using the learner centered approach?, item 20 (see Appendix A) asked respondents to list the problems they encountered in trying to implement a learner centered approach during their school based studies. In addition, answers to the same question were obtained from item 11 (See Appendix B) in which the respondents were asked to indicate whether they encountered problems in using a learner centered approach during their first three months of teaching. At the time of graduation, participants listed the following problems encountered during their school based studies: uninvolved, language problem, shyness, assessment, classroom management, and noise. During their third month as beginning teachers, they identified the following problems: noise, late coming, assessment, absenteeism, language problem, shyness, lack of resources, and overcrowding. While noise, assessment, language problems and shyness were identified as problems both upon graduation and after teaching for three months, lack of resources and overcrowding only became problematic once the respondents had their own classes. Each of these topics will be discussed below.

Noise

When respondents were asked to list the problems they encountered in using a learner centered approach during their school based studies, four of the seven

respondents who returned the first questionnaire (see Appendix A) listed 'noise' as one of the problems they encountered in using a learner centered approach during their school based studies. "Yes, pupils made a lot of noise when they are doing group work." They also found it hard to control their classrooms. "It was difficult for the teacher to control the class because of the noise during group work." Similarly, Betty believes that one of the disadvantages of learner centered approaches is 'noise' and she stated that "some teachers don't like using a learner centered approach because children make a lot of noise especially during group work and some of the children would be off the discussion topic" (Feb. 15, 1996). Although many participants attributed noise to the use of group work, Alice pointed out that the noise problem in her classroom was due to lack of basic resources.

I am not happy with teaching a combined class especially when I don't have enough pencils for my class. I have to share the pencils with the grade 1 teacher and these are not enough for my large class. When it is time for writing, I normally get the grade 3s to write first. But the problem is that the grade 2s will be making noise and complain that they also want to write. If there were enough pencils, I would make them write at the same time and in this way noise problem will be minimized. (Feb. 23, 1996).

Brufee (1993) cautions that "during small-group work, teachers and students alike may have to adjust to the noise produced by several excited conversations going on at once in the same room" (p.30). He also pointed out that teachers should be aware that

classroom noise can be attributed to classroom size and to material used in building the classrooms, such as whether they are sound proof or not. He further stated that teachers are affected by noise differently depending on their beliefs and expectations of the teaching and learning situation. Bruffee (1993) clearly puts it this way:

Sensitivity to classroom noise is largely a matter of expectation. Teachers who normally think that students should sit quietly and take notes or speak only after they have raised their hands find that the din of conversation in a smoothly running collaborative classroom takes a lot of getting used to. Most college and university teachers and students have not experienced classes where active, articulate students are the norm. They decidedly are the norm within the protective security of collaborative consensus groups. With experience, some teachers even become so acutely sensitive to the register of sounds generated by consensus group conversation that they can tell by the tone of the din whether or not things are going well. (p.30).

Although 'noise' was listed as a problem associated with a learner centered approach, it should be noted that it can be classified into categories; for example, 'meaningless noise' and 'meaningful noise'. The teacher should therefore determine whether what he/she terms as 'noise' is meaningful noise or meaningless noise. If it is noise caused by group discussion or class discussion and is contributing to learning, then that noise should not be perceived as a problem. Teachers should also be aware that the traditional teaching method would be much different from the new teaching method in which each learner's voice is expected to be heard compared to the situation where only the teacher's voice is heard in the classroom.

Shyness

Although a learner centered approach requires that all learners should be actively participating in the lesson, shy learners often do not contribute anything in group discussions. As one of the respondents pointed out; "shy learners do not participate in group work."

Although a learner centered approach requires that all learners should be actively participating in the lesson, shy learners often do not contribute anything in group discussions. As one of the respondents pointed out; "Shy learners do not participate in group work."

Zimbardo (1977) cautions that shyness can lead to the following problems:

- Shyness makes it difficult to meet new people, make friends, or enjoy potentially good experiences.
- It prevents you from speaking up for your rights expressing your own opinions and values.
- Shyness limits positive evaluations by others of your personal strength.
- It encourages self-consciousness and an excessive preoccupation with your own reactions.
- Shyness makes it hard to think clearly and communicate effectively.
- Negative feelings like depression, anxiety, and loneliness typically accompany shyness (p.12).

According to Zimbardo (1977), "to be shy is to be afraid of people, especially people who for some reason are emotionally threatening: strangers because of their novelty or uncertainty, authorities who wield power, members of the opposite sex who represent potential intimate encounters (p.12). The Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1993) defines the term 'shy' as timid and nervous in company; self conscious; disliking or fearing; turn suddenly aside in fright, avoid involvement in sudden startled movement (p.846).

Zimbardo (1977) believes that shyness is the result of the following:

- a prior history of negative experience with people in certain situations, either by direct contact or by watching others getting "burned".
- not learning the "right" social skills.
- expecting to perform inadequately and therefore becoming constantly anxious about your performance.

Zimbardo has given teachers hope by stating that since children can be influenced or can learn to be shy they can therefore be taught not to be shy or as he puts it; "unlearn" such behavior. It is therefore the teacher's duty to try and help such children to overcome their shyness by building children's self-confidence.

A learner centered approach was viewed by participants as an approach that does not accommodate all learners. Shyness was one of the problems that was noted by the researcher during classroom observations. When asked to come up to the front of the room to share a story or recite a poem, some children would end up facing the

chalkboard instead of facing other children and most of them would be fidgeting with their fingers, pulling up their dresses or shirt, constantly scratching their heads, or worse, cover their mouth with their hand while speaking, making it difficult to hear what they are saying. Despite the teacher's encouragement, some would just stand up without saying a word. Both teachers interviewed expressed concern about shy learners who they find hard to involve in a lesson. When Betty was asked what she does to help the 'shy' learners, she had this to say:

I think these children are shy because they are not yet used to me and their classmates. Once they become comfortable with me as their teacher whom they can trust and other children as classmates and friends, I think they will start to open up. So what I am doing now is to make them work in groups, New groups will be formed until each child has had a chance of working with each child in class. The aim is to make children be familiar and know each other very well. During Physical training when children go outside to play I do the same thing. For example, if the game needs to divide into pairs, I usually encourage them to pairing with the opposite sex or with a different partner every time. Most of them have changed but I still have two who are still very shy but I think they will come around. I also think it is important to make the child feel good by recognizing even little good things children do by praising and appreciating their efforts. This will make the children feel good about themselves and will attempt to do other things and will make them to open up. I think by the end of the term everything will be fine (Feb.29, 1996).

Also, cited in Zimbardo (1990), also pointed out the importance of building the child's self-esteem as he puts it in this way:

A young child needs confidence in his (or her) environment and security in his (or her) relationships in order to grow and learn well. Confidence and security come from living in a world with some degree of order and predictability as well as with flexibility and freedom to experiment, explore, and cope with new and unfamiliar situations ... warm and understanding teachers help the child learn to share with other children space, equipment, play materials, affection, and attention, and to get along happily and successfully in a group of children (p.64).

Assessment

Four of the respondents contend that it is difficult for a teacher to follow the progress of each individual learner in a class. Four of the seven respondents asserted that it is hard for a teacher to keep track of the students' progress. "It is more difficult to monitor pupils' progress." Another respondent also pointed out that "I have a problem of assessing the children in order to determine their progress because some children refuse to participate and they don't do their homework or try to answer some questions when asked. I worry what will happen to them at the end of the year if they won't change." Similarly, Betty also expressed concern about 'continuous assessment' as one of the problems she was encountering in using a learner centered approach as she stated:

Another problem I have is that of using continuous assessment. Because children will not write examinations at the end of the year I have to give them marks from what they do everyday in a lesson such as participating in group or class discussion, and from their written work. But the problem is that when I give

children to work in groups I usually find that some children are just quiet they don't contribute something to the discussion and I am forced to give the members of the group the same marks although I know that some don't deserve the marks and I know it is unfair to other students who do all the work for others (Feb. 26, 1996).

Alice also expressed the same concern in this way:

Some children just keep quiet when asked a question they don't want to try even when I encourage them to share anything they want. When given some seat work, some don't want to write. I find it difficult to follow their progress and give them marks for the continuous assessment. Because they will not write an examination at the end of the year, their promotion to the next grade depends on their performance throughout the year. I am worried what I will do with these children who refuse to talk and write. But I hope they will change; maybe they are still uncomfortable with me and their classmates (Mar.4, 1996).

It is worthy to note that the findings of the College Monitoring Team indicated that the problem of assessment was also experienced by the teacher educators, as can be discerned from the following statement:

The other burning issue which is the cause of concern among college staff, is the issue of assessment and evaluation. Teacher educators need to have more concrete information on assessment and evaluation so as to implement the BETD according to its intentions and also to be able to inform and counsel students on their progress or lack of it. They need guidance on how to do continuous assessment, how to follow up after assessment was done, etc. Promotion criteria need to be elaborated and clarified and assessment procedures need to be finalized. As teacher educators are not perfectly clear on these issues they find it difficult to answer the questions the students raise concerning these issues. The

students want to know how the teachers will assess them, on what criteria and what ways. The lack of clarity leads to insecurity which cannot be conducive to teacher and student morale in the long run (p.3).

Farrant (1980) in his definition of the term 'continuous assessment' pointed out that:

Continuous assessment is a way of recording a pupil's progress without using examinations. It depends on carefully kept assessments of the child's work throughout his course, building up gradually into a profile of his performance. Considerable thought should go into what is assessed and into the method of assessment, so that all the child's skills in the subject are recognized and not simply the intellectual and literary ones which examinations normally measure (p.48).

Similarly, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in conjunction with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE)(1992) defined the term 'assessment' as:

... the process of observing, recording, and otherwise documenting the work children do and how they do it, as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child, including planning for groups and individual children and communicating with parents. Assessment encompasses the many forms of evaluation available to educational decision makers. Assessment in the service of curriculum and learning requires teachers to observe and analyze regularly what the children are doing in light of the content goals and the learning processes (p.10).

In the above statement the purpose of assessment is to inform the teacher and the parents about the child and guides the teacher to plan accordingly in order to meet the needs of each individual learner. In similar vein, Leavitt and Eheart (1991) asserted

that "the purpose of assessment in early childhood programs is to help caregivers and parents better understand, appreciate, and respond to the growth, development and unique characteristics of each child in their care" (p.4).

On a similar note, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia stressed the fact that:

The main purpose of assessment in Basic Education will be to develop a reliable picture of each individual learner's progress and level of achievement in relation to minimum competencies specified in subject syllabuses. That assessment will be used to inform learners and their parents of progress and achievement; to inform teachers of problems and guide ensuing compensatory teaching; and for promotion purposes (p.128).

Contrary to this more global view of assessment, respondents' concern about assessment is more geared towards promoting the child to the next grade. Although this is another purpose of assessment, it would be more beneficial and more positive to concentrate on assessment as a way of finding out about each child in order to provide appropriate learning opportunities for each individual child in order to succeed. Teachers should therefore concentrate on 'what' they are suppose to assess; on 'how' they are going to assess; and 'why' they should assess. I think if beginning teachers and even experienced teachers first concentrate on 'finding out' and employing teaching strategies to help each child overcome his/her weaknesses, this would, in return, alleviate the anxiety teachers experience on the issue of promotion.

Language problems

Three of the respondents indicated that a major problem they experienced in trying to implement a learner centered approach was teaching English which is the second language. Pupils do not understand, speak, or write English, thus making it impossible for the learners to contribute in class discussions or group work. As pointed out by one respondent: "most of my learners do not understand English if it is time for English, so it is very difficult for me to give instruction in English and some cannot talk or understand Lozi." On the same problem one respondent pointed out that "Pupils cannot speak English when grouped."

This was also one of the problems noted by the researcher during classroom observations and it was also mentioned by the two teachers interviewed. During the English period, both Alice and Betty used both Lozi and English. In one of the classes that I visited the problem was even worse (Alice's class) as there were five San (commonly known as Bushman) children who could not speak or understand either English, which is the second language, or Lozi which is the medium of instruction in the region in the lower primary grades. Their language was not a dialect of Lozi. It was fortunate that there was one child in class who could speak both Lozi and the children's language. I also observed that even children whose dialect was closely related to Lozi had problems in communicating in it. Most of the time the teacher had to give instructions first in Lozi and then in the dialect spoken by the children or vice versa.

Wolfe (1992) however asserted that "learning that takes place in the child's primary language does not slow down the child's acquisition of English, rather, instructions by means of the primary language in preschool through the early grades promotes and develops the deeper cognitive and academic skills that predict future success in the mainstream" (p.142). She believes that bilingual education is very important in early childhood education in accommodating children from different linguistic background. Wolfe (1980) pointed out that this view is also supported by the NAEYC and the NAECS/SDE. She cautions that the acquisition of second language is a developmental process and therefore teachers of young children should have knowledge of the following developmental stages:

a) The preproduction stage

Wolfe (1992) asserted that "at this stage second language learners have minimal comprehension and almost no verbal skills." She believes that children at this level focus "on listening and deciphering clues and input from teachers and peers." Wolfe (1992) cautions teachers who are dealing with children operating at this level to concentrate "on building receptive vocabulary for these children. They should use a 'natural approach method' to enhance listening comprehension, in which children respond to verbal commands and instruction without having to speak. Communications should be aided by gestures, actions, pictures, manipulative, and other hands-on, real objects. Teachers should assess children's comprehension by asking them to perform nonverbal actions such as pointing, nodding, matching, acting, and drawing" (p.142).

Teachers should also take note of the fact that "this stage of language acquisitions may last from a few weeks to three or four months depending on the child's self-esteem and the amount of anxiety he experiences in the program" (p.142).

b) The early-production stage

Wolfe (1992) asserted that at this stage, "children have internalized and can understand some basic vocabulary. They begin to use responses consisting of one or two words, such as "yes" or "no"; respond to who, what, and where questions; answer either/ or questions; and list simple nouns" (p.142). Wolfe (1992) cautions that children who are at this level should be encouraged and be provided with 'opportunities to use the word they hear regularly. Like in the first stage, children who are operating at the second stage also rely on listening skills and their comprehension is still very minimal and they should therefore be in an environment with lots of manipulative materials and visual aids to help them in understanding the meaning of words. Teachers should provide an environment in which children are surrounded by lots of real objects and manipulative to help them in understanding the meaning of words. Wolfe (1992) believes that the second stage can take two to three months.

c) Speech emergence

Wolfe (1992) pointed out that children who are at this stage are able to

communicate through the use of 'short sentences and phrases' although they have pronunciation and grammar mistakes. She also cautioned teachers not to directly try to correct their mistakes as this would discourage them from trying. She reasoned that it would be in the best interests of the child if the teacher just acts like a model. Children at this stage should still be exposed to real objects and manipulative to aid them in learning the second language. According to Wolfe (1992) this stage 'can last for up to two years' (p.142).

d) The intermediate-fluency stage

Wolfe (1992) asserted that children at this stage "are fluent in survival language and are able to communicate in face-to-face conversational speech with few errors. They have excellent comprehension in everyday, conversational language but are still developing comprehension in the academic or content-area language" (p.142). However, she pointed out that teachers should be aware that although this group's conversational language is much better, their understanding of academic content areas is not at this same level. Teachers are therefore advised to continue providing support to these children which can last for three to four years.

I believe that to be an effective second language teacher, it is important to have knowledge of the above stages. This would help the teacher to know how children acquire the second language and use the appropriate teaching strategies that would enhance and encourage them to want to learn more. This idea of providing a rich

environment and using real objects in the teaching of second language or any other subject matter should produce positive results in facilitating learning. An understanding of the above stages would also help the teacher to be patient with his/her students as (s)he is aware of the duration of each stage. Most of the participants in the study seemed to be frustrated during English lessons because children were unable to contribute in group discussion as they did not know English. To be able to discuss anything, one needs language. Even adults need to learn language first to be able to converse in it. While teachers are encouraged to help the children to learn the second language by providing a rich classroom environment with real objects, the two classrooms visited were far from being facilitative as nothing was display. It is quite likely that these two classrooms were typical of those of all the teachers in the study. If we really want children to learn a second language, it is important to create an environment which is conducive to learning and using that language.

Lack of materials/facilities

Although only one of the ten respondents listed 'lack of facilities/materials' as one of the problems encountered in trying to implement the learner centered approach, both Alice and Betty were concerned about the lack of resources at their schools. As already mentioned in the description of the two teachers, they experienced problems such as shortage of exercise books, pencils, syllabi, schemes of work, charts, bulletin boards etcetera. Poor physical facilities such as small classrooms, zinc and mud walls

without bulletin boards and classrooms without doors which were noted during the observations are not at all conducive to the implementation of the learner centered approach. The problem of lack of resources is crucial as it can prevent even the most creative teacher from producing materials that could aid the teaching and learning situation.

The problem of lack of facilities and materials, especially in the rural areas, was also reported by Callewaert and Kallos (1989). After visiting one rural school and one town school in the Caprivi region, they reported that significant differences existed between the rural and town schools in terms of materials and facilities. This can be discerned from their description of the two schools. They described the rural school as follows:

The school is a big compound off the road in a half forest, half Savannah landscape. A grass school of the type said to be common in Caprivi. On one side the houses of the teachers in traditional style, opposite them the classroom also traditionally built. Grass on the roof and broad openings. Rather small classrooms, very well ordered classrooms with desks, blackboard, furniture of normal modern type. No teaching aids visible (p.60).

In contrast, they described the town school as follows:

Modern brick school in a more or less semi-traditional suburb surrounding. The accommodation and the facilities seem richer and more varied than in the grass school, as are the dresses and the materials of the children. Classrooms are not very well ordered but there is plenty of self-made didactical material on the walls and a lot of decoration. In the yard there are flowers all around (p.61).

Although Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia states that: "Primary education shall be compulsory and the state shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective its right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining state schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge," it seems that the so called 'reasonable facilities' that should be provided by the state to all government schools are not being equally provided to all communities. The situations in the rural schools do not seem to have improved much since Independence in 1990. If we advocate a learner centered approach for our schools, provision of resources to all schools is very important in order to achieve this goal.

Summary

Findings from the data reveal that the participants had an understanding of the role of the teacher and the students in a learner centered approach consistent with how it is viewed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia. They used concepts such as 'teacher as facilitator', 'teacher as manager', and 'teacher as guide' in their descriptions of the role of the teacher, and terms such as 'active participants', 'learners as collaborators' and independent learners in describing the role of the learner in learner centered approaches. All these concepts are common in most Namibian documents dealing with recommended teaching approaches. Some of the participants' beliefs about the teaching and learning of your children are corroborated by statements issued by the national Association for the Education of Young children (NAEYC).

However it was noted that other terms such as 'caring and nurturing environment', 'love and trust', and taking into account the 'developmental stages' which are commonly emphasized by the NAEYC and other Early Childhood researchers/educators were missing from their descriptions. Similarly, their definitions of the term 'learner-centered approach', did not include all aspects or characteristics of learner-centered approaches. Their definition of the term was limited to such phrases as 'learner involvement', 'teaching from known to unknown', 'use of real objects', and 'use of group work'. Other elements of a learner centered approach such as learning by production, project work, field trips, and paired work which are common in the definition or explanation of the term 'learner centered' in some of the Namibian documents, were not mentioned at all.

The data also revealed that many of the beginning teachers turn to other experienced teachers who are teaching at the same grade level for support. Although Nemser and Floden (1986), Rosenholtz (1989) both cited in Hayes et al., (1991) stated that beginning teachers do not turn to other experienced teachers for help, on the contrary, beginning teachers in this study indicated that they received support from other experienced teachers especially those teaching at the same grade level. For example, six out of ten respondents indicated that teachers teaching at the same grade level were very supportive since they started teaching. This supports the findings by Blakey et al., (1989), Everett-Turner (1985), and Lortie (1975) who observed that beginning teachers usually turn to experienced teachers for help especially those who

are teaching at the same grade level.

The study shows that all nine respondents placed to teach in the village schools indicated that they had encountered problems in trying to implement a learner centered approach, while the only teacher placed in a town school stated that she did not encounter problems.

It is worth noting that most of the disadvantages that were identified by the participants at the time of graduation were listed as problems encountered in their effort to implement a learner centered approach. Problems such as assessment, discipline, insufficient and or inadequate teaching material and supplies which were pointed out by Veenman (1984) as commonly faced by beginning teachers in developing countries, were also among the problems mentioned by the participants in this study. Other problems were unique to specific situations in this study, such as classrooms without doors, small classrooms and language problem.

The strength and weaknesses of the BETD program are revealed by responses to item 13 and 14 (see Appendix B). The respondents mentioned several skills they acquired in their teacher education program which were very helpful to them as teachers, such as working the attendance register, using a variety of teaching methods, making their own teaching aids (if materials were available), lesson preparations, teaching from known to unknown, motivation learners, and drafting a scheme of work. On the other hand, the data also revealed that some other issues were either not included or were not dealt with in sufficient detail (to the satisfaction of some of the

student teachers). For example in item 13 (see Appendix B), one respondent mentioned that a skill he/she acquired in the BETD program was how to draft the scheme of work from the syllabus, however, in item 14 (see Appendix B), four out of ten respondents listed 'drafting scheme of work' as one of the things that should be included in the BETD program. For example one respondent pointed out that "student teachers should be taught how to draft a scheme of work", while another respondent stated that "I think some of these things were taught but not in detail such as how to draw up a scheme of work and how to work an attendance register. Three of ten respondents suggested that student teachers should be taught how to continuous assessment.

Other suggestions from the participants that might be of interest to the BETD teacher educators include instructing student teachers about how to conduct a research project from the beginning of their program in preparation for the research project they are expected to carry out during their final year; providing opportunities for student teachers to have workshops with teachers with regard to a learner centered approaches; introducing exchange programs between colleges in order to avoid unfairness in the grading of students; and introducing examinations at the end of their study program. It is, however, surprising that the participants in this study who are teaching in grades which are not required to write examinations should suggest that student teachers should be writing examinations. I believe that it was to their advantage to be graded in the same way that they are expected to grade their learners.

It may be that the participants were not aware that this was to their advantage, or perhaps the issue of favoritism emerged. Another possibility is that they have been writing examinations throughout their school life, and that grading using other means seemed unimportant.

The study also revealed that although most of the respondents were assigned to teach the appropriate grade (within grade 1-4), two participants were assigned to teach some subjects in a grade beyond their area of specialization (grade 5). Despite the fact that most of the respondents have experienced some problems in trying to introduce a learner centered approach in their classrooms, six out of ten respondents indicated that their views about a learner centered approach have not changed since they started teaching. This shows how committed they are to this approach. This commitment could be attributed to the participants' perceptions of the benefits for the child of learner centered approaches.

Most of the problems mentioned, as well as some suggestions put forth by the respondents, have implications for teacher educators as well as for school administrators in Namibia. This will be elaborated in the final chapter when reflecting on the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This final chapter presents the researcher's general reflections on the research questions and considers areas for further study. Based on the findings of the study and relevant literature, suggestions will be made which may be of interest to those who are concerned in providing quality and equal education to all Namibian children.

A. Reflections on research questions:

Would the first graduates of the Basic Education teacher Diploma (BETD) be well prepared and confident enough to introduce the learner centered approach in their classrooms?

In the first place the question was based on the assumptions that the participants would be able to successfully implement a learner centered approach if their views and perceptions of a learner centered approach were consistent with how it is viewed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia and by other researcher. Secondly, that the participants would feel confident to apply a learner centered approach if they were also taught in this way and were exposed to during their school based studies.

Although not all of the participants returned the first questionnaire, all the respondents who returned the questionnaire stated that they felt confident to have their own classrooms. In addition, the majority of the respondents indicated that they were going to use a learner centered approach in their classrooms. Only one respondent (a male) reported that he was going to use both a learner centered and a teacher centered

approach. However, after three months of teaching, when they were asked to indicate the teaching approach they were using, there was an increase in the number of those who were not using a learner centered approach. At the time of graduation, all respondents who returned the questionnaire indicated that they preferred to arrange the classroom seats in semi-circles or in groups, and none indicated that they were going to arrange their classroom in straight rows when they started teaching. However, after three months of teaching when they were asked to indicate the seating arrangement they commonly used in their classrooms, six indicated that they arranged their classrooms in straight rows; two stated that they set up their classroom in groups; while another two indicated that they arranged the seats in semi-circles. Although the participants were quite aware that a learner centered approach demands interactions between learners, by arranging seats in straight rows they were sending a different message to the learners. This does not mean that teachers should not use straight rows from time to time, but should be cautious of the fact that sticking to this arrangement throughout the year tends to discourage learner/learner interactions and favor more traditional teacher/learner interactions.



A further question that needs to be asked is why the majority of the respondents were using straight rows to organize the students, while at the time of graduation they were prepared to set up their classrooms in semi-circles and in groups? Although only one of the six respondents who indicated that they organized the classroom seats in straight rows indicated that the classroom was crowded therefore it was not possible



to arrange the seats in any other way apart from straight rows, it could be assumed that the other five might have had similar reasons for arranging the seats in straight rows. A further question that arises is why the classroom was said to be overcrowded? Was it because there were many learners (beyond the 30 recommended number) or was it because the classroom was too small for 30 students? Overcrowding in Alice's classroom was not due to the large number of learners, but to the very small size of the classroom. In the first school Alice had 49 students and the classroom was overcrowded, while in the second school she only had 29 pupils but the classroom was still overcrowded as the size of the room was very small. Throughout the time of observations the seats in both classrooms were arranged in straight rows. The teacher had no option but to be content with straight rows even though she wished to try out other sitting arrangements. To avoid this type of situation occurring which could discourage teachers from implementing a more learner centered approach, new schools might be built with larger rooms which could effectively accommodate the proposed number of pupils (30) per class. Alternatively lowering the number of pupils in small classrooms might facilitate more student interaction.

As most of these new teachers had done their student teaching in an urban center, there is also possibility that some of the participants were not familiar with the conditions in the rural or village schools in which nine of them were employed to teach. For example, in response to item 14 (See Appendix B), one of the nine participants teaching in the rural schools suggested that teacher educators should let

their student teachers be exposed to rural schools. At the time of graduation, the respondents sounded very eager, enthusiastic and confident in their ability to implement the new approach they had learned in their teacher education program. With nine of the ten participants teaching in rural schools, the reality of the harsh conditions in the rural schools must have been very frustrating and, to some extent, contributed to either the total abandonment of a learner centered approach, or abandonment of some of the aspects of a learner centered approach and a falling back on the old traditional teaching methods.

This problem might be partly overcome by taking into account the suggestion put forth by one of the respondents of exposing the student teachers to rural schools during their BETD program. This could be done by either allocating students to rural schools during their school based studies (teaching practice), or alternatively, having organized visits to rural schools so that student teachers could have time to observe and interact with teachers in rural schools and identify different conditions in the rural schools. In some ways, this could help them to be better prepared. As many schools in Caprivi region where the study was conducted are in the rural areas, it is reasonable to estimate that the majority of the graduates from this region would be allocated to schools in the rural areas. The idea of familiarizing the student teachers in this region to rural school would really benefit the student teachers. For example, as supplies are very scarce, it might help them think of making collections of some of the resources they might need which are hard to get in the rural areas.

Although all respondents indicated that all their teacher educators used a learner centered approach in teaching them and that the majority arranged the seats in circles, semi-circles, and groups, this did not result in all the graduating students automatically adopting a learner centered approach. This could be attributed to the fact that some of the graduates were faced with different problems which were not conducive to the implementation of a learner centered approach. For example, Alice and Betty were very strong supporters of a learner centered approach. Unfortunately, problems such as lack of resources, poor classroom environment, and overcrowdedness made the two teachers fall back to more teacher centered teaching strategies most of the time. For example, Alice was discouraged to display anything in her classroom because of its lack of doors which resulted in goats roaming through the classrooms after school.

It might be worth asking why some student teachers (who have undergone the same teacher education program) when they start teaching experience certain problems while others do not, and why many beginning teachers feel inadequate when they start teaching, although they felt confident right after completing their teacher training program. Initially, at the time of graduation, the majority of the participants was confident to have their classroom and use a learner centered approach. What made a few of them change their views? Is it because of the classroom realities which they didn't anticipate, such as other additional work a teacher has to do in addition to the actual teaching load or is it the lack of resources?

Would the first graduates of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) be influenced to use teacher directed methods?

The above research question was based on the assumption that the participants would implement a learner centered approach if it was favored and supported by other members of staff. Most respondents indicated that teachers in the schools they did their school based studies in, used a teacher-centered approach with only a few mentioning that teachers were using a learner centered approach. In contrast, six of the beginning teachers in the study indicated that teachers at their schools were using a learner centered approach while only two of the beginning teachers were at schools where teacher centered approach is commonly used by teachers and another two are at the schools where teachers use both learner centered and teacher centered approaches. It was noted that the two respondents who indicated that the commonly used teaching approach at their schools was teacher centered were also themselves using a teacher centered approach. One of the two respondents who indicated that teachers at their schools used both learner centered and teacher centered, stated that he was using both teacher centered and learner centered approaches. Although it is difficult to draw a conclusion from such a few individuals, there is some evidence to suggest that some of the participants were influenced by other teachers in their school settings. In this case it would seem important for teachers in the field to receive inservice experience to encourage and support them in using a more learner centered approach.

Would the first graduates of the new teacher program in Namibia encounter problems in implementing a learner centered approach in their classrooms?

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the above research question was based on the assumption that the participants might abandon a learner centered teaching strategies if they encountered many problems. Even though the participants encountered problems in implementing a learner-centered approach, the majority indicated that they were still using a learner centered approach and only two had completely abandoned using it. As this study was conducted over a relatively a short period of time, a similar study conducted for a long period of time e.g. over a year or two might yield different results. It would also be interesting to observe the classroom practices of all the participant to verify whether the seven respondents who stated that they were using a learner centered approach were indeed using all the aspects of a learner centered approach or whether they were just using one aspect of approach. From my observations of Alice and Betty, I noticed that not all the characteristics of a learner centered approach were incorporated in the teaching learning situation. This practice can also be discerned from the responses of the participants when they required to describe the teaching approach they were using. It would appear that while the majority of the respondents selected only one or two aspects of a learner-centered approach, they claimed that they were using a learner-centered approach. For example, most of the interaction I observed in the two classroom was teacher/learner interaction with the teacher asking questions relating to

at topic and the learners giving answers. Most of the questions asked were very structured with only one answer. Yet a learner centered approach in the Namibian context should encourage critical thinking in learners. This will not be achieved if teachers rely only on question and answer methods which are geared to getting a one word answer from the learners.

Although all the participants were able to spell out the role of the learner and teacher in a learner centered approach, the actions of Alice and Betty were not consistent with what they knew about the approach. It does not, therefore, automatically imply that if one has a good theoretical knowledge about a teaching approach one can readily put it into practice. There may be many impediments (some of which are beyond the teacher's control) that hinder the application. These novices need support from their teacher educators, colleagues, and administrators in order to successfully put theory into practice.

In Chapter 2 of this study, it is stated that Turney et al (1986) believe that both beginning teachers and experienced teachers can benefit from each other if they share their experiences. This mutual relationship between the beginning teacher and experienced teachers could apply to some of the Namibian schools in which the graduates of the BETD program are employed. The novice teachers of the BETD program with their knowledge of the learner centered approach, could for example, share their knowledge with the experienced teachers who have undergone teacher-

centered training, while on the other hand, the novice teachers could learn administrative strategies from their experienced colleagues.

B. Implications for further study

The more I looked at the findings of this study the more questions I had, and because it was impossible for me to investigate all questions that arose from the data, future research could focus on the following identified issues:

- A similar study could be conducted that would focus on the implementation of a learner centered approach by College Instructors. This would aim at revealing whether or not student teachers are introduced to all aspects of the learner centered approach.
- As there are some marked differences between village schools and town schools in terms of facilities and availability of resources, a comprehensive study is needed on the prevailing conditions of rural schools in order to identify the major problems and provide solutions to these problems which seem to impede the implementation of a learner centered approach.
- Since the issue of assessment was one of the concerns of most of the participants in the study, it would be beneficial to both the teachers and

students to conduct a research study that would focus on assessment. The study could concentrate on finding out whether teachers have adequate knowledge in this area and provide suggestions if necessary on how to equip them.

- As this study was carried out over a short period of time, a longitudinal study could be carried out and might yield different findings.
- As the study revealed some inconsistencies between what the respondents said and what was observed of the classroom practices of the two teachers, this made the query the consistency between what one says and what one does. It would therefore be beneficial if this study could be replicated, together with observations and interviews of all the participants involved.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire # 1

Learner Centered Approach Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your understanding, opinion, and interest in a "Learner Centered Approach." Your participation and response in this study is highly appreciated.

Please read each question carefully and indicate your response by ticking the appropriate box [] or print your answer in the space provided. Use the back page if you need more space.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Indicate your gender:

- ☐ 1. male
- ☐ 2. female

2. Indicate your age group:

- ☐ 1. 18-23
- ☐ 2. 24-28
- ☐ 3. 29-33
- ☐ 4. 34-38
- ☐ 5. 39 and above

3. Indicate the highest Secondary grade passed:

☐ 1. grade 10

☐ 2. grade 12

☐ 3. grade 10 + credit courses in grade 12

☐ 4. Other (specify) _____

4. Were you employed prior to enrollment into the BETD program?

☐ No

☐ Yes (please list the types of jobs) _____

5. Did you hold any other post secondary diplomas or certificates prior to enrollment into the BETD program?

☐ 1. No

☐ 2. Yes (List the qualifications) _____

6. What is the main reason you decided to enroll in the BETD program?

☐ 1. Interest in the teaching profession

☐ 2. Its emphasis on learner centered approach

☐ 3. Employment opportunity

☐ 4. Other (specify) _____

**B. STUDENT TEACHER PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF
LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH**

7. Explain in your own words what you understand by the term "Learner Centered Approach."

8. Describe how you perceive the role of the teacher in a "Learner Centered Approach."

9. Describe how you perceive the role of students in a "Learner Centered Approach."

10. List advantages of "Learner Centered Approach."

11. List disadvantages of "Learner Centered Approach."

C. COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

12. Which Teaching Approach did your lecturers use most?

- ☐ 1. Learner Centered Approach
- ☐ 2. Teacher Centered Approach
- ☐ 3. Other (specify) _____

13. Which seating arrangement was mostly used in your college classrooms?

- ☐ 1. Straight rows
- ☐ 2. Circle
- ☐ 3. Semi-circle
- ☐ 4. Other (specify) _____

14. Which areas in your teacher education program you still feel you need more experiences?

15. Which areas do you feel most confident in?

16. Now that you are about to complete your teacher education program, do you feel prepared to have your own classroom?

☐ 1. Yes

☐ 2. No

Please elaborate your answer.

17. What are your beliefs about the teaching and learning of young children?

D. PRACTICUM (SCHOOL BASED STUDY) EXPERIENCE

18. Which Teaching Approach did you use most during your school based studies?

☐ 1. Teacher Centered Approach

☐ 2. Learner Centered Approach

☐ 3. Other (specify) _____

19. How was your school based classroom organized?

☐ 1. In straight rows

☐ 2. In a circle

☐ 3. In a semi-circle

☐ 4. Other (specify) _____

20. Did you encounter any problems in using a Learner Centered Approach during your school based study?

- ☐ 1. N/A (did not use Learner Centered Approach)
- ☐ 2. No
- ☐ 3. Yes (List the problems) _____
- _____

21. Which Teaching Approach was commonly used in the school(s) you did your school based study?

- ☐ 1. Teacher Centered Method
- ☐ 2. Learner Centered Method
- ☐ 3. Other (specify) _____
- _____

E. IN THE FIELD AS A TEACHER

22. How do you intend to set up your classroom when you start teaching in January 1996?

- ☐ 1. In straight rows
- ☐ 2. In a circle
- ☐ 3. In a semi-circle
- ☐ 4. Other (specify) _____

Please give reasons for your choice

23. Describe the teaching approach you intend to use in your classroom.

Appendix B

Questionnaire # 2

LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH SURVEY

My sincere appreciation to all of you who participated in the first part of my study by completing the first questionnaire during your last month at College. My research study could not have progressed to this stage without your participation. I understand that you are very busy, I would however appreciate it very much if you would once more furnish me with information about your initial teaching experiences. To those who filled in the first questionnaire, you might find that some of the items have been repeated. This is because both the first questionnaire and this one are anonymous.

Please read each question carefully and indicate your response by ticking the appropriate box [] or print your answer in the space provided. Use the back page if you need more space.

1. Indicate your gender:

[] 1. male

[] 2. female

2. Indicate your age group:

- ☐ 1. 18-23
- ☐ 2. 24-28
- ☐ 3. 29-33
- ☐ 4. 34-38
- ☐ 5. 39 and above

3. Were you employed as a teacher before?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

4. What is the main reason you described to become a teacher?

- ☐ 1. Interest in the teaching profession
- ☐ 2. My love for children
- ☐ 3. Too many holidays
- ☐ 4. Other (specify)_____

5. What grade level are you currently teaching?

- ☐ 1. Grade 1
- ☐ 2. Grade 2
- ☐ 3. Grade 3
- ☐ 4. Grade 4
- ☐ 5. Other (specify)_____

6. Where is your school located?

- ☐ 1. In town
- ☐ 2. In the rural area

7. Who were most supportive to you since you started teaching?

- ☐ 1. School Principal
- ☐ 2. Experienced teachers teaching at the same grade level
- ☐ 3. All experienced teachers
- ☐ 4. School Inspectors
- ☐ 5. Subject Advisor
- ☐ 6. Other (specify)_____

8. Which Teaching Approach are you using in your classroom?

- ☐ 1. Learner Centered Approach
- ☐ 2. Teacher Centered Approach
- ☐ 3. Other (specify)_____

Elaborate on your choice_____

9. Which seating arrangement is mostly used in your classroom?

- ☐ 1. Straight rows
- ☐ 2. Circle
- ☐ 3. Semi-circle
- ☐ 4. Other (specify)_____

10. Which Teaching Approach is mostly used at your school?

- ☐ 1. Teacher Centered Approach
- ☐ 2. Learner Centered Approach
- ☐ 3. Other (specify)_____

11. Have you encountered problems in using a Learner Centered Approach?

☐ 1. N/A (do not use Learner Centered Approach)

☐ 2. No

☐ 3. Yes (List the problems) _____

12. Have your views about learner centred approach changed since you started teaching?

☐ 1. Yes

☐ 2. No

If your answer 'Yes', explain how your views have changed.

13. What are some of the things you acquired in your teacher education program which you think are very helpful to you as a teacher?

14. What are some of the things you feel should have been included in your teacher education program?

15. What suggestions or advice would you give to improve your teacher education program (the BETD)?

Appendix C
(Letter Inviting Participants)

University of Alberta
Department of Elementary Education
551 Education South
Edmonton, AB
Canada, T6G 2G5

October 10, 1995

Dear Graduate Student,

Re: Research Participant Request

I am currently doing my Master of Education degree in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. I am interested in doing a research study on the first graduates of Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD). My interest was prompted by the fact that the BETD teacher program was founded on the principle of learner centered approach which promotes learning through understanding. I am very eager to conduct an investigation into the use of a learner centered approach by Beginning Teachers of a Learner Centered Teacher Program specializing in Early Childhood Education (grade 1-4). This study is done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Early Childhood Education.

I have designed two questionnaires for this study to be administered to the graduates of Basic Education Teacher diploma BETD specializing to teach grades 1-4. The first questionnaire which will be administered during your last month at college is aimed at getting your opinions, concerns, problems, and your school based experiences in connection with the learner centered approach. The second questionnaire is also intended for all of you who graduated from Caprivi College of Education with specialization in Early Childhood Education. This will be administered during your third month of teaching (March 1996) to get your initial teaching experiences, concerns, and problems.

To gain an in-depth understanding of your initial teaching experiences, I need at least three beginning teachers who will work with me from January 1996 - March 1996. If you are interested fill in the consent form attached to the questionnaire.

The volunteering participants, will be interviewed during their first three months of teaching (January 1996 - March 1996) on a weekly basis. Interviews will be in a form of conversation and will be scheduled at your convenience. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-taped. I anticipate that the interviews will not be longer than an hour. As soon as I have transcribed the interviews, I will share the transcript with you so that you can make any necessary corrections. Participating in this study also entails visiting your classroom on a monthly basis (January 1996 - March 1996). Classroom visits will be scheduled at your convenience. Short extracts from interviews or classroom observations may be used in my thesis to illustrate key ideas. All measures will be taken to protect your identity by making use of pseudonyms throughout the study. If you decide to withdraw from the study, your decision will be honored without any penalty.

As a teacher educator, with interest in Early Childhood Education, I am anxious to learn from you about your experiences, concerns, and problems with regard to the implementation of a learner centered approach. I believe that increased knowledge of the transition from student teachers to teachers as experienced by beginning teachers may help teacher educators to improve in their role of preparing future teachers. In addition, this study will provide valuable information that will be helpful to teacher educators and administrators in Namibia in planning the in-service programs as well as refining the teacher education program to meet the needs of beginning teachers.

I will be in Namibia in mid December 1995. Upon arrival, I will contact those who are interested in participating. If you need more information you can reach me at Tel. No. 3480 (Ngweze) or can write to me at this Address:

Box 246
P.O. Katima Mulilo
Republic of Namibia

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Cecilia M. Sibuku (Mrs.)

Appendix D

Alice's First School



Appendix E

Alice's Second School



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Appendix F

Betty's School



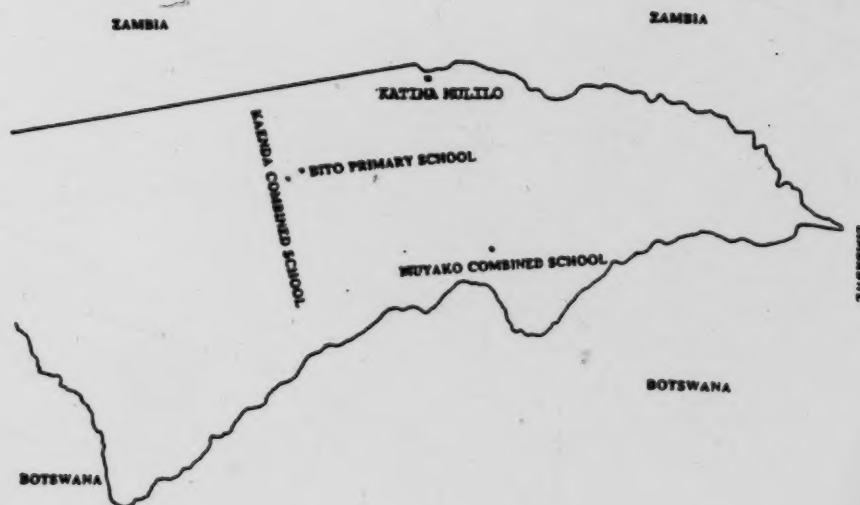
Appendix G

A Map of Namibia Showing the Four Colleges



Appendix H

Schools Visited and Katima Mulilo



APPENDIX I

The Rationale for the New Teacher Education

- i) The teacher education for Basic Education will first and foremost meet the needs for professionalisation of the teacher - a person whose commitments and sense of responsibility, knowledge and skills will raise the quality of education in the entire country.
- ii) The program will be a unified study for all teachers in Basic Education, combining a common core foundation for all, with opportunities for specialization in relation to phases of schooling and subject areas. It will strike a balance between professional insight and skills, and subject knowledge. There will be consistency between the aims and objectives and the structure and implementation of the program. Various types of exposure to the classroom situation will be a closely integrated aspect of the study. The student teacher's actual achievements and competencies will be assessed in a variety of ways, giving an all round picture of their development.

The program is based on a democratic pedagogy, a methodology which promotes learning through understanding, and practice directed towards the autonomous mastering of living conditions, and will relate closely to the curriculum intentions of Basic Education, and to the context of the school in society.

- iii) It is a professional program directly related to the demands and challenges of Basic Education. The focus of Basic Education is on the learner's needs, potentials, and abilities. Teachers must therefore have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to interpret syllabi and subject content on the basis of the aims and objectives of Basic Education and relate these to the learner.

The learner centered education presupposes that teachers have a holistic view of the learner, valuing the learner's life experience as a starting point for their studies.

Teachers should be able to select content and methods on the basis of a shared analysis of the learner's needs, use local and natural resources as an alternative or supplement to ready-made study materials, and thus develop a high degree of learner participation, contribution and production.

- iv) The historical and cultural context of Namibia today, and the nature of the teaching profession, needs teachers who are adequately qualified, self-reliant, motivated and enthusiastic. The teacher must be able to meet the challenges of the realities of an educational system in change and development.

The teacher is a key person for the development of the nation, and has a lot of potential as a local resource for the community. It is therefore essential that the teacher relates closely to the community and can integrate school and life outside the school for the learner.

- v) The study program is not seen as the final stage of formal education, nor as the completion of teacher education. The rapidly increasing and changing state of knowledge, and the new demands that are made on the role and functions of the teacher, make it impossible to regard initial teacher education as an isolated part of a career. Rather, it provides a selection of knowledge and experiences as the first induction into the profession, an initial step in an ongoing process of professional growth and development.

*Adapted from the Broad Curriculum for the Basic Education Teacher Education
Diploma 1992:2-3*

APPENDIX J

Aims of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma

The goal is to create a national and common teacher education for Basic Education related to the needs of the nation, the local community, the school, the learner and the teacher.

The main aim of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma is to develop the professional expertise and competencies which will enable the teacher to optimize the new Basic Education for the learners, and to be fully involved in promoting change in educational reform in Namibia.

Basic Teacher Education will strive to:

1. develop a teacher who will respect and foster the values of the constitution of the Republic of Namibia, contribute to nation building, and respond positively to the changing needs of Namibian Society
2. develop understanding and respect for cultural values and beliefs, especially those of the Namibian people
3. enhance respect for human dignity, sensitivity, and commitment to the needs of learners
4. develop a reflective attitude and creative, analytical and critical thinking
5. develop the ability to actively participate in collaborative decision making
6. develop social responsibility towards learners, colleagues, community and the nation as a whole
7. promote gender awareness and equity to enable all Namibians to participate fully in all spheres of society

8. enable the teacher to promote environmental awareness and suitable management of natural resources in the school and community
9. develop awareness of varying roles and functions of the teacher and commitment to the teaching profession
10. develop an understanding of learning as an interactive, shared and productive process
11. enable the teacher to meet the needs and abilities of the individual learner through organization, management and assessment of teaching and learning processes
12. prepare teachers who will strengthen the partnership between school and community
13. develop adequate command of English and another language of Namibia to be able to use them as media of instruction
14. prepare the teacher to be able to develop and use the creative and expressive abilities and skills of the learners
15. develop the ability to create learning opportunities which will enable learners to explore different ways of knowing and develop the whole range of their thinking abilities
16. provide the student teacher with sufficient breadth in curriculum content and depth in selected subject areas, to be able to identify and select basic knowledge content for learners, and to organize and sequence content and learning situations appropriately
17. develop a positive attitude towards individual differences and enable teachers to utilize them to meet social and individual needs.